

Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee

28 May, 2013, at 10.00 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Chambers (Chair);
Councillor Spence (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Tranter, Young and Wright.

Apologies: Councillors Eustace and Hogarth.

13/13 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 April, 2013, be confirmed as a correct record.

14/13 Findings of the Safeside Review

The Chair presented the findings of the scrutiny review of the Safeside facility at Fire Service Headquarters.

The Committee had established a working group to take forward and gather evidence for the review, supported by officers and various witnesses in order to ensure that the group received relevant information. The group had met on 10 January and 15 February, 2013.

The group had concluded that the majority of visitors that were currently attending Safeside were not from the high risk groups that the Service sought to target. There were, however, options to increase visitors from those groups including offering discounts and a number of free visits.

The Committee noted that more work was required to raise awareness of the facility and various methods of approaching schools needed to be considered, for example, personal visits by firefighters to schools as opposed to posting out literature.

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The Committee acknowledged that a major reason for non-attendance was due to transport issues. Whilst the Authority currently owned a coach, it would be in use for the whole day if used for Safeside visits and there was no replacement vehicle if the coach broke down/was out of use.

Officers confirmed that they were in discussions with partner agencies with a view to securing funding for a bus to transport school children. The Committee also felt that representatives of Centro should be invited to visit Safeside to raise their awareness of the facility, to highlight that schools were struggling to meet transport costs and to ascertain whether they could contribute towards transportation costs to encourage school attendance.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked members and officers for their valuable contributions on the review of Safeside.

The Committee also made the following comments:-

- that engagement to promote Safeside should be extended to include community group leaders;
- that further work should be undertaken to encourage senior citizens to attend Safeside in order to raise awareness on safety within their homes;
- that Section 41 members should increase awareness within their local communities in order to stimulate attendance rates and be more proactive by engaging with schools and encouraging partner agencies to provide funding.

Officers confirmed that work was currently being undertaken to widen the user base of the facility.

The recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee would be considered for approval by the Executive Committee at their meeting to be held on 10 June, 2013.

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Resolved:

- (1) that the findings of the Safeside review, and the recommendations arising from the review, as set out in the Appendix, be approved;
- (2) that the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair and/or Vice-Chair, amend the report to include the recommendations and comments now made by the Scrutiny Committee to ensure accuracy and clarity;
- (3) that on the completion of Resolution (2) above, the Monitoring Officer make the necessary arrangements and submit the findings and recommendations of the Safeside review for consideration by the Executive Committee at its meeting to be held on 10 June, 2013.

(Meeting ended at 10.24 am)

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Appendix

Safeside Review Recommendations

Recommendation	Responsible Officer/Member
That priority continues to be given to the priority groups that the Service is targeting as part of its vision outlined in the Plan under the banner 'Making the West Midlands Safer'.	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
That a member of the Authority be designated 'champion' for Safeside to promote the facility and to report regularly to the Authority on activity and progress.	Chair
That Section 41 members on the Authority be encouraged to promote and raise awareness of Safeside at their home authorities.	Chair/Section 41 members
That further sponsorship and external funding opportunities be investigated to fund the cost of visits to enable offers and discounts to be made to schools (for e.g. by approaching the Authority's insurers and transport providers).	Community Fire Safety supported by Operations Commanders
That school governors, headteachers and school fora be approached to raise awareness of Safeside and in particular, year 5 teachers be targeted through a marketing and promotion strategy utilising both Safeside resources, wider West Midlands Fire Service and Fire Authority members as appropriate and by providing briefings for primary and secondary heads fora within the seven districts.	Community Fire Safety/Ops Commanders and Section 41 members in partnership
That Community Safety Officers/Firefighters be recommended to visit schools in order to raise awareness of Safeside.	Community Fire Safety supported by Operations Commanders

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Recommendation	Responsible Officer/Member
That schools be recommended to consider utilising Pupil Premium to fund visits.	Community Fire Safety/Ops Commanders and Section 41 members in partnership
That Section 41 members of the Authority be encouraged to seek views from the schools in their local area by making personal approaches where possible.	Section 41 members
That links be established with local Health and Wellbeing Boards, Clinical Commissioning Groups and Safeguarding Boards (both children and adults) to mirror the good practice and success of the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Board Pilot Scheme.	Operations Commanders supported by Community Fire Safety
That links be established with the Police to raise awareness of Safeside and encourage visits from appropriate groups to address crime and disorder issues.	Community Fire Safety
That links be established with partner agencies, including community leaders, the Youth Service and senior citizens in order to promote the Safeside facility, to widen the user base of the facility and to raise awareness with different audiences.	Community Fire Safety
Constituent authorities be asked to investigate levels of attendance and awareness in their own area by placing an item on Safeside on the work programme of an appropriate scrutiny committee.	Section 41 members to liaise with their respective local authorities
That more pre-booked sessions for members, parents, staff and local charitable groups be offered and that Safeside continue to be promoted during school holidays.	Community Fire Safety
That a separate piece of work be undertaken with regard to how barriers relating to transport can be overcome to enable more visits.	Community Fire Safety

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