

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

**8 April, 2013 at 10.00 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham**

- Present:** **Members of the Authority**
Councillor Edwards (Chair);
Councillor Idrees (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Aston, Singh-Atwal, Auluck, Chambers,
Clinton, Davis, Douglas-Maul, Finnegan, Foster,
Hogarth, O'Neill, Quinnen, Sealey, Singh, Spence,
Tranter, Walsh, Ward, Wright, and Yardley.
Mr Ager.
- Officers:** **West Midlands Fire Service**
Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer P Loach;
Assistant Chief Fire Officers P Hales and G Taylor (Acting);
Director Resources M Griffiths;
Director Human Resources D Johnson;
T Embrey, M Russell-Hamilton, P Mika and S Warnes.
- Clerk and Monitoring Officer**
N Sharma and G Wythes.
- Apologies:** Councillors Davies, O'Reilly and Young;
The Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer.

9/13 **Chair's and Chief Fire Officer's Announcements**

The Chair reported that Helen Finlan, Administration Team Leader, had suffered a broken leg in a fall. He had sent a letter on behalf of the Authority wishing her a speedy recovery.

He also announced that the Service had had a busy three weeks around the Easter period. Sadly there had been three fatalities in fires in Stourbridge and Halesowen, but the Service had rescued a number of people from fires in Wolverhampton, Coventry and Birmingham. There had also been a chemical incident. This peak of activity underlined the importance of what the Service delivered, and the meeting today would discuss resources and how the additional income from Council tax would

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be used to support front line service.

10/13 The Plan

The Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that comments had been received from members on the draft of The Plan that had recently been circulated. The document would now be submitted to the Authority for approval on 15 April 2013.

11/13 Staffing Strategy

Members received a presentation illustrating how operational staffing levels were monitored and adjusted. The number of firefighters in the Service was reducing as a result of the recruitment freeze and the number of leavers. A number of strategies linked to the response model had been put in place to mitigate this reduction and to ensure that attendance times could be maintained. These ranged from introducing different staffing models, the roll-out of the brigade response vehicles and re-starting recruitment.

The recruitment plan comprised three elements: attraction, assessment and development. There would be positive action to attract candidates from hard-to-reach groups who were under-represented in the Service.

12/13 Response Model Update

The Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer outlined the current response model operating in the Service. This was based on an attendance time of five minutes at a high risk category one incident; maintaining 38 fire stations with at least one pump rescue ladder at each station; an evidence based approach to response based on risk; and a prevention/protection strategy. This was an effective approach evidenced by the fact that the number of fires, and deaths and injuries from fires, was continuing to fall.

The keys to survival in a fire were having a smoke detector fitted; good advice on fire safety; survival advice from fire control; good attendance times; and competent firefighting. Effective performance against the five minute attendance time was the basis of the Service's improvement plan. The Service compared well with other fire services on attendance times.

All stations had at least one pump rescue ladder. Brigade response vehicles were being allocated to stations on an evidence-based approach.

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These vehicles were deployed mainly to secondary incidents and also supported major incidents. There had been considerable savings to the Authority from the introduction of brigade response vehicles and performance standards had been maintained. Other services had closed fire stations or reduced the number of fire engines in order to reduce expenditure but this had only been achieved by relaxing attendance times.

(Meeting ended at 11.30 am)

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