

<p>Notes of the Policy Planning Forum</p>
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**14 December 2015 at 10.30 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham**

- Present:** **Members of the Authority**
Councillor Edwards (Chair);
Councillor Idrees (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Afzal, Aston, Atwal Singh, Barlow,
Barrie, Clinton, Craddock, Davis, Douglas-Maul,
Hogarth, Miks, Mottram JP, Quinnen, Sealey,
Shackleton, B Singh, P Singh, T Singh, Skinner,
Spence, Tranter and Ward.
Mr Ager.
- Officers:** **West Midlands Fire Service**
Chief Fire Officer (P Loach)
Deputy Chief Fire Officer (P Hales);
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (G Taylor);
B Brook, J Connor, M Hamilton-Russell, M Griffiths, S
McGrath, P Shergill, S Timmington and S Warnes.
- Clerk and Monitoring Officer**
K Gowreesunker (Clerk)
M Dudley (Monitoring Officer)
S Sahota (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
- Apologies:** Councillors Dehar, Eustace and Young.
- Observers:** Nil

26/15 Chair and CFO's Announcements

The Chair and Chief Fire Officer welcomed all attendees to the Policy Planning Forum.

The Chair noted that there was an intention to reduce the amount of paper used by the Authority. Tablets had been trialled by the lead members previously and the intention was to go paperless by September 2016.

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The current arrangements cost approximately £6000 per annum, and it was hoped that a move to paperless working would realise some level of savings. Further information would be reported back at the Policy Planning Forum in January 2016.

Presentations to the Forum

The following presentations were given to the Policy Planning Forum:

- Potential Impact of the Combined Authority on Governance Arrangements
- Flexible Funding Arrangements
- Community Safety Strategy
- Daily Operational Digest
- Staffing Update

27/15 Potential Impact of the Combined Authority on Governance Arrangements

John Edwards, the Chair, provided a verbal update on the potential impact of the combined authority on governance arrangements and the proposed new powers for Police and Crime Commissioners:

There had been a certain degree of speculation surrounding the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections next year. However, it appeared that the election would go ahead as per the previously agreed timeline (May 2016).

The Government intended to legislate to enable PCC's to take on the responsibilities of the fire and rescue authority in their area (as part of the consultation on 'Enabling closer working between the Emergency Services' which concluded 23 October 2015).

The Bill would provide new powers to the PCC, and place a duty on blue light services to co-operate more closely. In terms of closer co-operation between blue light services, this was no issue for WMFS as it already works closely with such services.

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The devolution deal for the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) had been agreed and signed in November. The deal was signed by the West Midlands leaders, HM Treasury, and the Business Secretary, but not the Department of Communities and Local Government. The document would need to be signed by the applicable Local Authorities.

There was very little information currently available regarding the proposed Mayor and the potential impact such a role could have on the Fire Service.

It was believed that there was an opportunity to make a case for future governance arrangements and pursuance of commissioning, in the WMCA.

In terms of timescales, the devolution document had not provided any information regarding the timescales of the Mayor role. The year 2017 had been floated as a potential for the Mayoral election; however the lack of any local elections scheduled for that year and concerns over voter turnout had made this seem questionable.

The Chair referenced a letter that he had sent to the Chair and Vice Chair of the WMCA, in September 2015 (copies of the letter were circulated to Members at the meeting). The purpose of the letter had been to set out the role of the Fire Service and its contribution to making the West Midlands safer, to health, to jobs and the economy, and to excluded young people, amongst other areas. It had been noted that the Chief Executives of the local authorities appreciated the work of the Fire Service and were keen for the Service to be involved. The Fire Authority is a statutory body and is at the heart of the West Midlands, and therefore must be involved in and be a part of the WMCA.

28/15 Flexible Funding

Mike Griffiths, Strategic Enabler of Finance and Resources, and Preith Shergill, Strategic Enabler DICE, delivered a presentation on flexible funding arrangements:

An overview of the WMFS budget was provided and it remains heavily reliant on the government grant although the balance had evened out a little since 2011, due to the further reduction in grant revenue and slight increases in council tax.

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There were a number of potential variables to the budget:

- Impact of potential changes to governance arrangements due to the PCC / WMCA and potential funding issues
- The intention for 100% localised business rates, replacing the current government grant
- The imminent release of the financial settlement by government (currently estimated to represent a £14m deficit)

Over the last year, the Service had looked at a number of options to help tackle the budget deficit, including commissioning and internal cuts. The Service had faced a number of challenges to some options such as regionalisation.

WMFS currently generates some income although relatively low amounts via initiatives including:

- Shared Fire Control arrangements with Staffordshire FRS
- ICT work with other local authorities and services
- Transport Engineering Workshops work with other services
- External business training (BEST)

The Fire Authority and the Strategic Enabling Team had made a commitment to the service delivery model (prevention, protection and response).

The Localism Act allows Local Authorities, including Fire Authorities, to explore different ways of working. Flexible funding was not just an optional requirement, but a necessity. There is the opportunity to change parts of the Service, and remain committed to maintaining the level of excellence.

Flexible funding options include:

- Commissioning from health sector
- Commissioning through Primary Authority / business communities
- West Midlands Combined Authority – devolution deal
- Social value and commissioning
- Social value and procurement
- Social value and sponsorship

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The offer from WMFS includes:

- Cost effective / business benefit
- A trusted brand
- 24/7 cover
- The provision of a rapid response with a very high quality service
- WMFS is at the heart of local communities
- Causes behind the causes
- Capability and expertise
- Evaluation and sharing of data

The Service had begun to explore commissioning in the health sector, learning more about the sector and the opportunities it represents, and promoting fire as a health asset, with examples including the Telecare project in Coventry, and the exploration of undertaking early hospital discharges, easing winter pressures, and social prescribing.

New areas of work had been identified, with the biggest growth in the business sector. WMFS conduct statutory risk assessments and evidence has proved a demand for the Service to undertake risk assessments that are not statutory, a service which could be provided at a charge. Additionally, automatic fire alarms, alarm receiving centres, and Local Enterprise Councils (LEP's), provide potential opportunities.

Social value continued to be explored, with a focus on three key areas:

- Procurement
- Commissioning
- Corporate social responsibility

Two approaches have been identified to corporate social responsibility:

- The 'traditional' approach comprising the sponsorship of social projects / community outcomes
- Social investment (social impact bonds)

Additionally, a 'social value tool' is in development which will calculate social value. Current calculations for 2016/17 indicate a social value return to the community of £2.37 for every £1.00 invested. Emailed PS – waiting for confirmation of exact figure.

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29/15 Community Safety Strategy

Ben Brook, Group Commander Integrated Risk Management, delivered a presentation on the Community Safety Strategy (CSS) and new interactive web tool:

WMFS understands its communities via the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). It provides an evidence based approach to WMFS' service delivery model. WMFS ensures it is transparent in its approach and is fulfilled by the CSS.

An interactive CSS web tool had been developed which allows members of the public and other interested parties to check the risks in their area, including real incident data. It is intended to be launched in April 2016 along with the 'The Plan'.

Ben Brook presented a video to the Members which outlined the IRMP and introduced the interactive CSS web tool. This was followed by a demonstration of the CSS tool via an interactive session with the members.

30/15 Daily Operational Digest

Sean McGrath, Group Commander Operations Performance Officer, delivered a presentation on the Daily Operational Digest (DOD):

A stakeholder group met on a monthly basis to discuss response times and to identify intervention work with operational crews to improve response times where applicable (linked to performance indicator P1 'the risk based attendance standard'). Crews carried out a lot of work to improve the response times and as a result, WMFS is now one of the top three services nationally. As of last quarter, quarter 2 2015/16, the response time for category 1 incidents was 4 minutes 42 seconds. However, the work would not stop there and the Service will continue to aim for improvement.

Actions taken as a result of the work detailed above included the provision of Tom Toms, development of a reaction time dashboard, publication of the 'Seconds Do Count' newsletter, and the roll-out of topography boards on stations.

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Previously, the Daily Operational Briefing Sheet had been issued to middle managers but this wasn't necessarily communicated further, for example to firefighters. The DOD is now distributed across the whole Service, to all staff.

The DOD provides information on all incidents in the previous 24 hours and includes the:

- number of category 1 incidents
- percentage of incidents that met the attendance time target for the relevant category
- average reaction time

The 'At a glance' section provides readily available information for Crew Commanders and Watch Commanders allowing for more analysis to be carried out by crews.

The CFO informed members that the DOD would be distributed to them via email following this PPF meeting.

In response to Members' questions, the following answers were provided:

- The attendance time commences when Fire Control mobilise the first resource. The call handling time is recorded separate to this. The use of 'pre-alerts' had been trialled recently (when a 999 call is received, the telephone exchange can identify broadly where the call is being made from, enabling a pre-alert to be sent to the appropriate station notifying staff that mobilisation is imminent). Analysis was currently being undertaken from the trial and Fire Control.
- The response times are fast but they reflect just the first appliance attending an incident. Upon arrival, the Officer in Charge will assess and deploy resources appropriately in a fast and assertive manner, enabling staff to get to work and affect firefighting / rescue procedures as soon as possible.
- A series of controlled burns in domestic dwellings were carried out last year in Kings Norton. These formed the basis and evidence of survivability.

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- It is important to think beyond fire as the need for a rapid response applies to a number of incident types including road traffic collisions. Rapid intervention is important to assist casualties, to provide oxygen, prevent fluid loss, enable extrication and then to pass the casualty onto the Ambulance Service.

31/15

Staffing Update

The Chief Fire Officer provided an update on staffing:

The situation remained the same as per the last update provided to members at the PPF meeting on 9 November. The Service continued to engage with the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) on a weekly basis. A joint Panel meeting with the Chief Fire Officer, the Chair, and the FBU Brigade Secretary was planned to be held on 6 January 2016 although this was still to be confirmed.

Members would continue to be updated on progress and any further developments.

(Meeting ended at 12:45 am)

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