

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

**25 March 2019 at 10.30 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham**

Present: Members of the Authority
Councillor Edwards (Chair)
Councillor Iqbal (Vice Chair)
Councillors Aston, Barlow, Barrie, Brackenridge,
Craddock, Dehar, Hogarth, Jenkins, Miks, Spence,
Tranter and Young
Sarah Middleton
Gurinder Singh Josan
Mr Ager

Officers: West Midlands Fire Service
Deputy Chief Fire Officer (P Hales)
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (G Taylor)
A Afsar, B Brook, S Burton, J Campbell, P Fellows, N
Griffiths, M Hamilton-Russell, R Houlston, M Price, S
Timmington, S Warnes

Clerk and Monitoring Officer

K Gowreesunker (Clerk)
S Sahota (Monitoring Officer)
M Griffiths (Treasurer)

Apologies: Councillor Walsh
Professor Simon Brake
Chief Fire Officer (P Loach)

Observers: Nil

6/19 Chair and CFO Announcements

Cllr John Edwards, Chair of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA), welcomed all attendees to the Policy Planning Forum.

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Gurinder Singh Josan CBE, of the West Midlands Strategic Police and Crime Board, was welcomed to the meeting. Mr Josan would be the representative of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner on the WMFRA.

The report 'Governance of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service – Approval of Statutory Order and Proposed Constitutional Detail' had been submitted to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Board on 22 March. The outcome of the meeting included the confirmation of the WMCA's consent to the laying of the Order in Parliament, and the acceptance of proposals to provide additional constitutional provisions and to deliver a Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Framework of accountabilities, subject to the approval of the constituent local authorities.

7/19 Governance Update

Karen Gowreesunker, Clerk to the Authority, provided an update on Governance:

There had been a pause in the laying of the Order on 9 January due to significant changes to the CFO's accountabilities. An update had been provided to the Fire Authority in February regarding the local assurances developed with the WMCA in order to resume with the governance direction.

On 22 March, the WMCA Board approved:

- The Laying of the Order in Parliament
- Constitutional proposals and CFO accountabilities framework, subject to further approval of Local Authorities as required
- The WMCA Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer to approve the final draft Order, in consultation with the CFO and Chair of WMFRA
- Confirmation of a commitment to review governance arrangements in the next Mayoral term with a focus on enhancing CFO accountabilities

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It was noted that the Home Office, in line with their own procedures, would request approval by the seven local authorities prior to the laying of the Order.

Three areas had been addressed during the early stages of the governance journey:

- The ring fencing of budget and reserves
- The establishment of the Mayoral Fire Committee
- CFO accountabilities (local assurances in WMCA Constitution and clauses)

Next steps and an indicative timeline were discussed with Members.

In answer to Members' questions, the following points were raised:

- The Service had engaged with the Monitoring Officers of the seven local authorities. Birmingham City Council and Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council had both indicated that the proposals would be reported back to their respective councils. In the case of Sandwell, this formed part of their normal constitutional process.
- It was confirmed that in the event of any future proposed changes to accountabilities, for such to be made, a unanimous vote would be required in addition to consultation with the WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee and taking into account recommendations of the CFO.

8/19 Developing the Strategy 2019 – 2022 (Target Setting)

Gary Taylor, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, delivered a presentation on developing the Strategy for the period 2019 to 2022, including an overview of the Service's priorities and performance indicators (PI) for the forthcoming year.

Response priorities:

- Risk based attendance:
 - The most serious emergency incidents will be attended, on average, within five minutes to save

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life, protect homes and businesses, and keep our transport networks moving

- Operational Excellence:
 - Our commitment to operational excellence will reduce risk to life and property and enable an assertive, effective and safe emergency response to all incidents whilst supporting firefighter safety
- Specialist Response:
 - At all incidents we attend we will lead and co-ordinate rescue operations whilst working collaboratively with other agencies to deliver an excellent response and meet public expectations
- National Resilience:
 - We will enhance resilience and deliver a local, national and international response to major incidents, emerging threats, and humanitarian situations through our specialist response teams

PI 1 Category 1 risk based attendance standard – five minute target. Performance for 2018/19 was forecast to be approximately 4 minutes 45 seconds. Further improvements would be achieved through digital transformation including further pro-active use of 999eye and the implementation of pre-alert across stations. Performance would be monitored throughout the year, particularly focussing on any potential impact due to the reduction in resources as a result of the revised strategy implementation.

Prevention priorities:

- Home Safety:
 - The number of people killed or seriously injured by fire-related incidents will reduce as we focus, with our partners, on the risks faced by the most vulnerable people in our communities.
- Safety, Health and Wellbeing:

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- The safety, health and well-being of the most vulnerable people in our communities will improve through our interventions that are directly linked to vulnerability from fire.
- Arson:
 - Arson-related incidents will fall, supporting safer and stronger communities, as a result of our partnership working.
- Road Safety:
 - Fewer people will be killed or seriously injured on West Midlands roads and we will keep our transport networks moving, as we work with the West Midlands Combined Authority and other organisations to develop and deliver interventions that support the West Midlands Regional Road Safety Strategy.

PI 2 Accidental dwelling fires – a 1% reduction was forecast for 2019/20. Evidence indicated that the Service was bucking the national trend where incidents were increasing. In addition, the number of incidents observed to date were some of the lowest since the Service had started to record the data.

PI 3 Injuries at accidental dwelling fires – the proposed target represented a 13.5% reduction in 2019/20 compared to the three year average. The PI correlated with PI 2 and similarly, the number of incidents were the lowest observed since the Service had begun to record the data.

PI 4 The number of deaths from accidental dwelling fires – no target was set for this PI. It was noted that one fatality was one too many.

PI 5 The percentage of Safe and Well visits referred by our partners – a target of 40% had been set for 2019/20. This reflected an expected reduction in numbers following the audit of partnerships that has highlighted recording and quality issues. Data had been cleansed and the approach to partnerships had been refined, with work ongoing to identify most effective partners. Additionally, the Service was no longer delivering falls response

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which had also resulted in a decrease in the number of partnership referrals received.

PI 6 The number of Safe and Well points – the target for 2019/20 represented a 13% reduction compared to the three year average. This reflected reduced capacity due to the reduction in resources as a result of the revised strategy implementation. It was noted that the reduction would be mitigated by balancing appliance availability, for example resourcing to reflect key contact time with the public.

PI 7 The number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions – the target for 2019/20 represents a 4% reduction compared to the three year average. The WMCA Regional Road Safety Strategy had recently been launched, representing an opportunity for further collaborative working. A dedicated WMFS Officer had been seconded into the WMCA to develop the strategy in line with the Service's priorities.

PI 8 Deliberate fires in dwellings – the 2019/20 target represented a 2% reduction compared to the three year average.

PI 9 Deliberate fires in non-domestic properties – the 2019/20 target represented a 5% reduction compared to the three year average. The number of incidents had been increasing, largely linked to the number of incidents occurring at HMP Birmingham. The Home Office intervention had led to a significant reduction in the number of incidents.

PI 10 Deliberate vehicle fires – the 2019/20 target represented an 8% reduction compared to the three year average. It was noted that this PI was affected by the environment and economy. Such incidents were a blight on communities and not just in terms of fire, but also additional factors such as anti-social behaviour.

Pi 11 Deliberate rubbish fires – the 2019/20 target represented a 7% reduction compared to the three year average. Unprecedented performance during 2018/19 had resulted in a 23% reduction in incidents, and the number of incidents equating to an all-time low. It was noted that the number of incidents could increase over a three year average.

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PI 12 Deliberate fires in derelict buildings – the 2019/20 target represented a 31% reduction compared to the three year average. The enhanced working arrangements that operational personnel had with Local Authorities in obtaining the boarding up and securing of derelict properties in a timely manner and through continued support from Fire Authority Members was reflected in the performance of the PI.

Protection priorities:

- Compliance and enforcement:
 - Life and property will be protected by targeting high risk buildings and vulnerable businesses, including residential high rise to ensure compliance and enforcement of fire safety legislation
- Legislative change:
 - Improved community safety through implementing outcomes of the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety
- Collaboration and business engagement:
 - Improved community safety through innovative and contemporary approaches to the delivery of protection activities and working cohesively with partners at local, regional and national levels to influence the development of new and enabling legislation
- Prosperity and economic growth:
 - Prosperity and economic growth are enhanced by educating and supporting businesses including collaboration with other regulators and partner agencies
- Reducing business disruption:
 - Disruption to businesses, communities and West Midlands Fire Service caused by unwanted fire signals from fire alarms will be reduced

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PI 13 Accidental fires in non-domestic properties – the 2019/20 target represents a 2% reduction compared to the three year average. It was noted that a 5.8% increase in the number of incidents had been forecast for 2019/20. Although this would be within the upper tolerance level, it would be above the target if the figures were realised. The Service had increased its protection resources, embedded the Business Support Vehicles (BSV) within the Service Delivery Model, and upskilled firefighters to provide low level, low complex advice.

PI 14 The number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment in dwellings and non-domestic premises – the 2019/20 target remained the same as per the 2018/19 target. A significant reduction in the number of incidents had been observed following the introduction of the BSVs, however the number of incidents had increased over recent years. The Service was working on understanding the reasons why increases in the number of incidents were being experienced.

Sarah Warnes, Strategic Enabler People Support Services, provided an overview of the Service Support PIs:

PI 15 The percentage of employees that have disclosed their disabled status – the target of 100% disclosure rate remains. The current disclosure rate was 95% which was high amount for any organisation. It was noted that this PI was important to the Service in that it reflected the level of trust staff had in the organisation. Staff could declare 'not stated', however it was reported that the percentage of such declarations had dropped to 14% which was positive.

PI 16 The number of female uniformed staff – the target for 2019/20 has increased to 162, compared to 129 in 2018/19. It was noted that performance would be very much reliant on the Service's ability to recruit (with a target of 50% of recruits to be female). The approach taken to recruitment and positive action had been incremental as the strategy was developed, for example increasing attraction rates and the provision of support for applicants.

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PI 17 The percentage of all staff from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities – the target for 2019/20 has increased to 12.4% compared to 11.7% in 2018/19. Again, performance would be reliant upon the Service's ability to recruit (with a target of 35% of recruits to be from BME communities).

PI 17a The percentage of uniformed staff from BME communities - the target for 2019/20 has increased from 10.1% to 11.1% (with a target of 35% of recruits being from BME communities).

PI 18 The average number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness, all staff – the target had been reduced by 9% for 2019/20, aligning with the ridership factor. It was noted that an increase in both uniformed and non-uniformed sickness had been identified over the three year period. The target was set to reflect a level of improvement that was achievable for the Service. A higher reduction could be set but there was a risk that such a target would simply not be realistic.

The PIs splitting sickness by uniformed and non-uniformed staff (PIs 19 and 20) reflected PI 18.

PI 21 The total number of injuries – the target of 126 would be maintained for 2019/20, reflecting the low number of incidents and the positive health and safety culture of the Service.

PI 22 The total number of RIDDOR injuries – the target for 2019/20 had been reduced to 14 from a previous target of 15, reflecting the low numbers experienced and forecast.

PI 23 To reduce the Fire Authority's carbon emissions – the target for 2019/20 remained the same as the previous year. The Service aimed to reduce carbon emissions further through the use of the fleet.

PI 24 To reduce gas use of Fire Authority's premises – the target for 2019/20 represented a 2% reduction against the three year average.

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PI 25 To reduce electricity use of Fire Authority's premises – the target for 2019/20 represented a 1% reduction against the three year average.

It was noted that an agreed programme of planned works was in place to support the forecast reductions in the use of gas and electricity.

In answer to Members' questions, the following points were raised:

- The performance indicators were referenced within the Fire Authority's Statement of Assurance (which was submitted to the Home Office) and were available to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. Additionally, the PIs were reported to Members, reported to Local Authorities via the Section 41 Members, were available on the Service's website, and were shared with partners.
- The Service was working closely with the Police. The Service had changed the way it defined arson to deliberate fires, in line with the Police definition, as a difference in reporting had been experienced previously. The Service had a dedicated fire investigation team who worked closely with the Police, rather than simply handing an incident over.
- The Service was mobilised to falls response (when the service was being provided) but the second phase would be to deliver a Safe and Well. As part of the withdrawal from the contracts, the exit strategy was to maintain the referral pathways (as many individuals represented some of the most vulnerable people in our communities). However, the Service had struggled to maintain these. As a result, the Service was intending to approach the current providers with a view to increase the number of referrals.
- Solutions to reduce the number of road traffic collisions fell under three broad areas, physical (for example road layout, speed bumps), education and legislative / enforcement.
- It was acknowledged that it would take a long time for the workforce to become truly representative of the area it served. As a result, recruitment targets were set to reflect

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this, for example, the target for recruits from BME communities was set at 35%. The percentage of female recruits was 40% but the target would be increased incrementally to 50% and then to 60% (as it was acknowledged that the Service had been underperforming in this area). It was noted that analysis had indicated that it could take until 2035 for the makeup of the workforce to reflect the population of the area (which highlighted the size of the task).

The meeting closed at 12:11 hours.

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