

## **Notes of the Policy Planning Forum**

**4<sup>th</sup> November, 2013 at 10.30 am  
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham**

**Present:**           **Members of the Authority**  
Councillor Edwards (Chair);  
Councillor Idrees (Vice-Chair);  
Councillors Aston, Chambers, Clinton, Collingswood,  
Davis, Delaney, Douglas-Maul, Finnegan, Foster,  
Hogarth, Mottram, Quinnen, Shackleton, Singh,  
Tranter, Yardley and Young.

**Officers:**           **West Midlands Fire Service**  
Deputy Chief Fire Officer (P Loach);  
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (P Hales);  
Director Human Resources (D Johnson);  
J Connor, M Griffiths, M Howard-Russell and P Mika.

**Clerk and Monitoring Officer**  
N Sharma  
R Jones.

**Treasurer**  
Stuart Kellas.

**Apologies:**       Councillors Singh Atwal, Eustace, O'Reilly, Spence and  
Wright;  
Mr Ager;  
Chief Fire Officer.

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### **Chair's and Deputy Chief Fire Officer's Announcements**

The Chair made a number of announcements as follows:-

- An Elected Members Leadership Development Day, a joint training event with Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority, had been organised by the Local Government Association on 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2013. To date 14 members had indicated their intention to attend; ten from the Authority and four from Staffordshire;
- Members Personal Development Process – In order to progress this could members give two dates, two times and their telephone numbers to the Chair.

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The Deputy Chief Fire Officer made a number of announcements as follows:-

- It had been announced that injured Firefighter Tommy Sedgwick had multiple spinal fractures as a result of a fall down a lift shaft whilst tackling a blaze in Handsworth. Firefighter Sedgwick had been discharged from hospital and was with his parents in Nottinghamshire; he faced a long road to recovery. He could be contacted through email;
- Members had made a good impression when they had attended the Asian Firefighters Association Conference last week;
- Further firefighter strike action was planned for Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2013 from 6.30 pm until 11.30 pm and Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2013 from 6.00 am until 8.00 am. There had been a severe house fire in the Coventry area during recent strike action. An update report on the situation would be made to the Authority meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2013.

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### **Marmot Review Partner Status**

The Director Operations, Gary Taylor, gave a presentation on the Fire Service's application for Marmot Review Partner Status.

The Marmot Review outcomes concluded that it was a human right to have a healthy life and that health inequality and deprivation mirrored each other. Evidence had shown that people who felt good about where they lived were 200% less likely to have major mental health issues. It was also the most vulnerable or certain groups in society who became excluded.

The Review "Fair Society: Healthy Lives" had six policy objectives:

1. Give every child the best start in life;
2. Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives;
3. Create fair employment and good work for all;
4. Ensure healthy standard of living for all;
5. Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities;
6. Strengthen the role and impact of ill health prevention.

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The Fire Service was one of the market leaders in influencing behaviours and reducing health inequalities.

People, not even Marmot, realised the work the fire service did to contribute to the six principles:

Health and wellbeing information, primarily for children and young people, was delivered by the NHS at fire stations.

The £50k invested in the Aura Programme aimed at young people involved in or on the cusp of criminal activity was estimated to have saved society £370k. The Young Firefighters Association had been revised, there were now 16 branches across the West Midlands. There was also engagement with the Prince's Trust Programme and individually with suspected arsonists.

Safeside was a beacon of prevention in trying to engage children and their families. It opened in 2008 and in 2010 had 10,000 visitors.

Road safety funding was being cut by cash-strapped local authorities – the Fire Service was trying to make up this deficit including the RED initiative (Roadside Education).

There were 50 volunteers at Safeside, who were from the communities they served, and these had engagement with new migrants.

Joint working with partners was being further developed and, such as when undertaking home safety checks, intervening on each others' behalf, if appropriate. It was aimed to have one Vulnerable Persons Officer on each watch, this would make people more aware of the issues of vulnerable people. Wider partnership working allowed funding to be used more effectively and tap into additional resources.

In an effort to prevent arson and anti social behavior, authorities were being encouraged to bring empty retail premises back into use as soon as possible.

Advising on the timely removal of fly-tipping, which was seen as “fuel for fires”.

The homeless often talked to crew members. Attempts were made to identify, locate and refer such persons to appropriate partners.

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There was a lot to learn from the de-briefings following Serious Incident Reviews. Learning outcomes were identified and communicated to all partners. Training was shared to identify triggers and flags which presented themselves.

The activities of the Service have been mapped and aligned to the six Marmot objectives. These were not actions that we intend to do or one-offs but what the Service was actually achieving. The Service would present to the Marmot Commission on 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2013. Coventry CC had Marmot Status, along with five other local authorities. No other organisations, fire services, NHS, etc had yet achieved the Status.

In response to members' enquiries the following responses were made:-

- The volunteer scheme was Lottery funded; there was a member of staff to contact if people were interested; members were asked to promote the scheme in their areas;
- The Service tried to focus on the most vulnerable in society; it engaged with partners to try and use visiting slots more effectively;
- The assistance the Service gave with regard to road safety and young drivers was not acknowledged by insurance companies, it was an intangible benefit;
- Fly-tipping was raised by the Service, often at neighbourhood forums. If the location was made to known to officers they would try to get it removed as soon as possible, particularly around Bonfire Night. The Service was trying to influence the wider partnership agenda as to the escalating costs of removing such rubbish;
- The Young Firefighters Scheme operated within various communities across the West Midlands; the Chair asked that the locations be circulated to members;
- Figures were not kept on where visitors to Safeside were from; the Service tried to target attendance from schools in deprived areas but often the cost of coach transport was prohibitive, although the Service had trained a driver to try and assist attendance by such schools;
- The Service could sustain these functions in a time of budget cuts through its "brand" of "can do"; the achievement of the Marmot Status would be a pinnacle of achievement for the Service;
- The Service supported healthy eating and healthy lifestyles by its promotion of these issues to deprived children and their families.

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**Comprehensive Spending Review Update**

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer gave a presentation on how the Service, through financial planning, was attaining its key priorities and strategic objectives through the operation of The Plan. The education and assistance provided by the Service was helping to reduce the numbers of fires and their associated costs.

The Department for Communities and Local Government had announced that 10% cuts were required for fire services overall for 2015/16. It was likely that a further reduction of 7% would be required from 2016. There were also many significant unknowns and it was hoped that the additional monies received by an increase of £4.99 through Council Tax budgets for 2013/14 might be repeated for 2014/15.

Financial monitoring, in conjunction with The Plan, would continue but it was proposed that, in order to achieve further savings on printing and postage, that a trial be undertaken, initially with Section 41 members of the Authority, whereby tablets would be supplied to provide members with information in a more useable fashion. An approach had been made to a retail company to sponsor the trial. As part of the proposals it was also intended to establish a members' room with a printer at Fire Service Headquarters in what was the old library.

Members were supportive of the proposal and it was indicated that a similar trial was being undertaken by Solihull MBC, which had generated savings even after the initial outlay for the equipment. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Phil Hales would be overseeing the trial and the Chief Fire Officer's Personal Assistant, Julie Connor, would also be involved.

Members were informed that the new Plan for April 2015 would be developed in the next couple of months in good time for members to be able to lobby their respective MPs. The Chair had received responses from the Fire Minister after representations had been made to him by MPs following the recent letters which they had received from members.

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**Our Story Event Update**

Members received a presentation from the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Phil Loach, on the “Our Story” Event which was to be held at the Fire Service Headquarters on 7<sup>th</sup> November, 2013. All Fire Authorities in the country had been invited to attend to share in how the West Midlands Service had moved forward in what services it provided to the community and to evaluate how we were performing. The Event would tell the West Midlands story particularly through peer review and challenge and how we were influencing and being influenced.

The Event would show that the West Midlands had not relaxed its response/reaction time to incidents and what actions firefighters were undertaking, as shown in the earlier presentation on the Marmot Review, when they were not actively engaged in attending fires.

Mr Paul Fuller, President of the Chief Fire Officers Association, would be chairing the Event on behalf of the Service and its outputs on influencing our future would be given to the Fire Minister on 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2013. It was understood that the Minister was to give a keynote speech in London on 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2013.

Some of the attending Fire Authorities had asked if they could also bring elected members to the Event and this had been agreed. Members were therefore invited to attend if they wished. Proceedings commenced at 9.00 am with a market place event, followed by presentations from 10.15 am and the Event would end at 4.00 pm. Any members absent today would be contacted with the details.

(Meeting ended at 12 noon)

Contact Officer: Rosemary Jones Democratic Services Unit Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 0121 569 3896
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