

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**12<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2007**

**1. CORPORATE STRATEGY AND ANNUAL SERVICE PLAN**

Joint report of the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer.

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 THAT the Authority note the drivers for change to the current business planning arrangements.
- 1.2 THAT the Authority approves the proposed change to the planning process.
- 1.3 THAT the Authority approves the three year Corporate Strategy set out as Appendix 1 to the report.
- 1.4 THAT the Authority notes the outcomes of the consultation process in respect of the Action Plan section of the Annual Service Plan attached as Appendix 2 to the report.
- 1.5 THAT the Authority approves the Annual Service Plan attached as Appendix 3 to the report.

**2. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted for the Authority to note the drivers for change in the planning process; to note the outcomes of the consultation process in respect of the Action Planning section of the Authority's Annual Service Plan for 2007/2008; to approve the three year Corporate Strategy for 2007-2010 and to approve the Annual Service Plan for 2007/2008.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The current business planning arrangements and supporting documents have served the organisation well for a number of years and have received positive recognition within a variety of inspection reports. In pursuit of continuous improvement, consideration has been given to a number of elements that support the need for change to the current arrangements. The proposed changes will make service delivery the principal driver in the planning process, improve the Authority's ability to target resources at risk

reduction activity and should lead to improvements in performance management.

- 3.2 The Fire and Rescue National Framework 2006-2008 details the requirement for the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). The IRMP is expected to be a forward looking strategic level document that sets out how the FRA will deploy its resources to manage identified risks. The IRMP should drive the business needs of the FRA and will require the development by support departments of enabling strategies and plans.
- 3.3 The Framework further states that the IRMP should achieve Best Value for its local Council taxpayers and identifies the need for planning of the IRMP and the budget setting process to be co-ordinated. This is further supported by guidance issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) which emphasised the importance of alignment and, where possible, the integration of business and financial planning with the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) and the IRMP.
- 3.4 In addition to the specific guidance that is issued to Fire and Rescue Authorities the proposed changes have been developed with reference to:
  - the planning processes and documentation produced by Fire and Rescue Authorities rated as excellent by the Audit Commission;
  - good practice in the development of strategy as defined by the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) and recognised management text, and
  - consultation with the Brigade's External Auditor.
- 3.5 To enable the required change and the incorporation of improvements identified as a consequence of regular review, the planning process has been revised.
- 3.6 The changes enable the former Integrated Risk Management Plan to fulfil its intended purpose of being the key driver for subsequent planning activities and further enhance the integration of the financial and risk management processes. In addition, the changes support the inclusion of key external influences such as Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements. The revised process will enable the Authority to fulfil the requirements of statutory and other guidance and provide a golden thread in respect of service delivery from the FRA to the point of delivery and individual performance objectives.

- 3.7 To achieve this it is proposed to have a three year Corporate Strategy which is a forward looking, strategic statement, to be refreshed annually. It is intended to give an outline of the areas where West Midlands Fire Service will focus its activity for the next three year period. This sets out how we intend to meet the challenges that face the Authority, the challenges of providing a continually improving service, sometimes in innovative ways, to meet the expectations of our community and Government. This framework will allow us to navigate a clear path through the uncertainties ahead and will enable us to exploit the opportunities presented to us now and in the years to come.
- 3.8 To set out what we will be doing in the next financial year we will produce an Annual Service Plan. The Service Plan combines our Integrated Risk Management (IRM) Action Plan with our Business Plan, to ensure that our corporate objectives are driven by an assessment of risk in the community and an analysis of how we intend to manage our resources as a result. As an Appendix to the Service Plan, it is proposed to publish our Performance Targets to give an outline of our expectations for future performance.
- 3.9 The opportunity has been taken, to use the Annual Service Plan and Corporate Strategy as a means of enhancing communication with our staff. The draft Corporate Strategy has been circulated internally for extensive staff consultation and to invite involvement in its development. The Annual Service Plan has been created in a style designed to capture the attention of our staff in particular, as well as the public. The intention has been to contextualise our aims and objectives so that all of our employees are able to identify their role in contributing to the delivery of our service to the community.
- 3.10 Details of our achievements in relation to targets and performance indicators up to April 2007 will be released in our Annual Service Report during the summer. The Annual Service Report will be produced as part of the statutory requirement to produce on an annual basis a Best Value Performance Plan.

#### 4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Because the proposals in this report and the potential outcomes have and will lead to changes in policy, they have been subject to a full Equality Impact Assessment.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The course of action recommended in this report does not raise issues which should be drawn to the attention of the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

6. **TRADE UNION CONSULTATION**

The Trade Unions have been specifically consulted about the contents of the Action Plan of the Annual Service Plan as part of the statutory 12 weeks period of consultation. They have also been consulted as part of the full Equality Impact Assessment.

7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Medium Term Financial Plan is part of the three year Corporate Strategy. The planning assumptions and target setting process is timed to coincide with the budget setting process, ensuring that tactical and financial plans are aligned. The costs of printing the plans can be met from within existing budgets.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Best Value Performance and Business Plan

The Fire and Rescue National Framework 2006-2008

ODPM Circ 9/2004 Guidance on Best Value and Performance Improvement

Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

P&P Report: Lessons Learnt From Business Planning Cycle 2005/2006

Standing Order 22/06

F. J. E. SHEEHAN  
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

L. BATEMAN  
TREASURER

## Annual Service Plan Summary of Consultation and Corporate Board Responses – 2007-2008

Subject Area	Quantity of Comments	Summary of Comments	Authority Response
<b>HOME FIRE SAFETY CHECKS (HFSC)</b>	<p><b>FOCUS GROUPS</b></p> <p>12 (Coventry) + 8 (Birmingham) + 11 (Wolverhampton) + 6 (Business group)</p> <p>+ UNISON</p>	<p>Generally the checks were considered to be good. If the majority of deaths are in residential premises, then this is the way to go about reducing them. If they help prevent fires then the recommendation is a good one. The group generally supported the recommendation. Group generally positive, but they have to do a proper check when they (the firefighters) come and visit.</p> <p>The Fire Service should target the 'at risk' groups first. There will be vulnerable people out there such as the elderly who don't have them and cannot afford them (smoke alarms) and they should be targeted. Should be open to all but what about the at-risk homes? Couldn't it be done on a target basis rather than people ringing up and asking? Sweep an area that they know is more high risk.</p> <p>One participant was slightly sceptical about the effectiveness of the checks and requested some more figures or evidence re their impact ... there's no point in increasing the number if there hasn't been an impact.</p>	<p>The quality of HFSCs is monitored to ensure consistency and to maintain a high standard of service.</p> <p>By educating householders and fitting smoke alarms with a long-life battery, we will reduce demand on our emergency response service and reduce deaths and injuries in line with government policy.</p> <p>Vulnerable groups such as the elderly are specifically targeted with fire prevention activities, to ensure that we are using our resources in the most effective way.</p> <p>This is assisted by our involvement in partnership working with relevant agencies and our involvement in Local Area Agreements. We are also developing our information systems to ensure that relevant information is available for our personnel, so that prevention activity can be focussed on those areas that will benefit the most.</p> <p>In 1999/2000 on average we were dealing with 288 dwelling fires per month. This has been reduced to the current level of 174 per month. September 2006 was our lowest ever level with 136 dwelling fires during the month. Further work is in progress to verify the effectiveness of different approaches in fire prevention work in the community, so that best practice can be developed across the service.</p>

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	<p>12 (Coventry) + 11 (Wolverhampton) + UNISON + FBU</p> <p>11 (Wolverhampton)</p>	<p>Minority view, it's not a very productive use of time is it, going around fitting smoke alarms? Surely it should be up to the individual to fit smoke alarms? It seems like they are just trying to give them something to do rather than sit around waiting for fires to happen. It doesn't seem to be the best thing to spend money on ... it seems a waste of money.</p> <p>40,000 seems like a big number but what is that as a percentage of the houses in the West Midlands? It could be pittance. It's a very small percentage that is going to get sorted out. Need more information to decide whether the target is reasonable... depends on how many houses there are in the West Midlands – is that 1%, 5% etc? How many man hours do they have available to do this work?</p> <p>The plan to achieve 40,000 is commendable ... have serious concerns that you are setting a target which will only be achieved by hitting soft areas.</p> <p>Disagreement within the group re: the fitting of smoke alarms by firefighters. Comment was that they should and it was important for vulnerable groups but then the following question was raised:- Could they not employ someone on a minimum</p>	<p>To prevent death and injury is a productive use of our time, especially in light of a recent government report<sup>1</sup> into the economic cost of fire. It stated in that report, that the cost to society of a fatality is £1.375m; the value of a serious injury £155 000 and £12 000 for a slight injury, taking account of factors such as cost to the health services, lost productivity etc.</p> <p>It is also government policy to prevent fires, deaths and injury, so Fire &amp; Rescue Services have a duty to pursue this. Through offering advice and education, we can enable people to help themselves, to avoid the impact of fire.</p> <p>From the 2001 Census, there were 1 032 944 occupied households within West Midlands, so our target next year is to carry out HFSCs in approximately 4% of the total number. This target is set to increase year on year, but is still obviously a small proportion of homes. That is why we will ensure that we target our activity at the people who are most vulnerable to dwelling fires, so that our efforts produce the greatest reward per unit of time invested.</p> <p>The number of person hours dedicated to prevention activity, is decided through the action planning process carried out by each Borough Commander, guided by factors such as Government and Authority targets, LAA targets and other demands such as emergency response, training etc. The target of 40,000 is seen as a challenging, yet achievable figure.</p> <p>WMFS works in partnerships with other agencies to carry out safety checks and fit detectors and employs Community Advocates to help co-ordinate activity.</p> <p>Nonetheless, the professional advice of our firefighters, based on experience and technical training, ensures that we are able to provide a high quality service, enabling us to influence behaviour in a positive way, to reduce deaths, injuries and loss within our</p>

<sup>1</sup> The Economic cost of fire: Estimates for 2004; DCLG April 2006

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		<p>wage to install smoke alarms throughout the country? It doesn't have to be a firefighter that does this.</p> <p>Cold calling is not a good idea ... you could be working or have other plans. If there is prior notification of when they will be there then you can try and fit it in.</p>	<p>community.</p> <p>Residents are notified in advance of street campaigns, usually by leafleting, or other publicity. Specific appointments can be made for individual HFSCs, using a system of time slots that can be arranged through the local station, or our centralised booking service.</p>
<b>ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISIONS (RTC)</b>	<b>FOCUS GROUPS</b>		
	12 (Coventry) + 8 (Birmingham)	<p>Some confusion about what role the Fire Service has to play as opposed to the police ... Fire Service does not have anything to do with road safety... they go to crashes but it's not up to them to say 'drive properly please'. General confusion of the relative responsibilities and who pays the cost for what particular function.</p>	<p>Fire &amp; Rescue Services have a duty to participate in LAAs and the National Framework published by the Government, confirms the need for the Service to be involved in activities to reduce the number of road accident victims.</p> <p>Experience shows that we can have a positive effect on behaviour, particularly in relation to young people. Any success in reducing the impact of road accidents will have a positive effect on reducing demand for our emergency response service, as we now deal with almost as many road accidents as dwelling fires.</p>
	8 (Birmingham)	<p>More information/detail required on proposal – it just seems like jargon. They haven't thought it through, clutching at straws, padding out the Action Plan. The principle is ok but there is nothing for us to discuss ... need more tangible and concrete information.</p>	<p>More detailed information and statistical evidence will be made available in the forthcoming Annual Service Plan and our Corporate Strategy. Both of these documents will be available from April 2007.</p>
	11 (Wolverhampton)	<p>More information is required on the statistics. Why are children from lower socio-economic groups and ethnic minority backgrounds more at risk? How are the children dying? How many deaths are from joyriding? What times of day do these deaths occur?</p>	<p>The intention of the consultation exercise was to provide an indication of our intended actions for the next year, where this has the potential to impact upon our service. More detail will be released shortly and we will continue to analyse the relationships between the incidence of road accidents, the circumstances surrounding them and the characteristics of victims.</p>
	<b>EMAIL (1)</b>	<p>I attended many grass fires during Summer 2006 and none of them required less than</p>	<p>Your concerns in this area are valid and the points you make will provide a valuable contribution to our research into this issue. We</p>

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	FBU	<p>a full crew of firefighters. The proposal to send smaller numbers of personnel is, in my opinion, flawed. Many grass fires needed more than a single crew of 4 or 5 purely to get water onto the fire and prevent spread to nearby properties. Due to the great amount of physical effort involved in carrying hose to the incident, the hot weather and the heat of the fire we experience, it would be potentially hazardous under health and safety to expect firefighters to manage. The risk is either that someone will be injured, or a fire will spread and cause extensive damage to property.</p> <p>In agreement that RTCS should be reduced, ... prior to any new initiatives being implemented, the FBU should be consulted.</p>	<p>intend to investigate the feasibility of introducing alternative ways to respond to minor fires, including grass fires of the kind you describe, based on your experience. It is acknowledged that dealing with outdoor fires during spate conditions is a particularly arduous task and places several physical demands on firefighters. With this in mind, it would be appropriate to look at the whole issue of how we deal with fires of this type, and what options should be investigated in relation to: firefighting equipment used; firefighting media employed; different kinds of Personal Protective Equipment; refreshments; hydration; types of vehicles available; tasks required of individual crew members and mobilising arrangements and crewing. At this stage, our intention is primarily to make public our intended actions, in particular, where these could impact on our service to the community. Should this proposal go ahead as planned, it would involve a thorough investigation of every aspect of the way we respond to minor fires and an assessment of the experience of other Brigades who have introduced schemes of this kind. Addressing the concerns you have raised will form part of that work, before any changes are made to our existing systems of work.</p>
<b>COMMUNITY FIRE PROTECTION</b>	<b>FOCUS GROUPS</b>  8 (Birmingham) + 11 (Wolverhampton)  11 (Wolverhampton)	<p>General agreement with proposal... think it makes sense...sounds reasonable.</p> <p>If they are changing this to make sure that the high risk properties get checked first, this implies that high risk properties at the moment are not being seen quickly or</p>	<p>By amalgamating the list of properties to be inspected by our Fire Safety Officers, high risk premises will be given greater priority and will be inspected more frequently than those presenting a lower level of risk.</p> <p>Specific criteria are applied when allocating a risk score to a premise, in line with government guidance and monitored through audit.</p> <p>The criteria used to maintain the ranking of individual premises within the list will not change, but the list will become service-wide,</p>



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	<p>6 (Business group)</p> <p>FBU</p>	<p>regularly enough.</p> <p>It's a good idea but the service needs to look at risk profile carefully. What are the defining criteria...must look at everything...more information on the methodology of assessment is needed.</p> <p>Fully support the plan to target high risk premises, but still believe that we must maintain our obligations to other premises.</p>	<p>rather than being undertaken on a borough basis, as at present.</p> <p>This process will lead to a truer reflection of risk across our area, so that inspection activity is more robustly targeted in the right areas, regardless of local authority boundaries.</p> <p>Our intention is to continue to carry out fire safety inspections across a range of premise types, but to take steps to ensure that our resources are targeted at those presenting the greatest risk to life, regardless of their location within a particular Borough.</p>
<b>OPERATIONAL RESPONSE</b>	<p><b>FOCUS GROUPS</b></p> <p>12 (Coventry) + FBU</p> <p>8 (Birmingham) + 11 (Wolverhampton)</p>	<p>Most disagreed that motorcycles allowed easier access than larger vehicles but were highly supportive of the idea of a land-rover type vehicle. We do not believe that any alternative would be effective ... it would increase risk to the community.</p> <p>If one person goes and it's a major fire you then have to wait for the fire engine to come...there will be a delay. Reference the AFA response ... is that a good use of a fully trained firefighter's time and energy or could you send a member of support staff who has been trained in what to look for? How do you determine what is a small fire? What about crew? If it is to be crewed by existing firefighter's does that mean that you won't have full crew on the standard fire engines? What do the fire crews on the ground say about this?</p>	<p>No decision has been taken, with regard to specific vehicle types. We intend to investigate the most efficient way of responding to minor fires and to calls from Automatic Fire Alarms, based on analysis of our data and on the experience of other FRAs who have introduced schemes of this nature. We have a duty to investigate alternative methods of response and provide a service to the community that is both efficient and effective.</p> <p>A lone person will not be used to respond to fires, but it may be appropriate to send one person to investigate alarm actuations. Where a fire is involved, we would always send sufficient people to safely undertake firefighting duties.</p> <p>A minor fire would typically be outdoors, involving rubbish or grass, rather than buildings or property.</p> <p>A suitable system of staffing any proposed vehicles will need to be created, in consultation with our workforce. No decision has been taken as the options for how this could be achieved, have yet to be investigated.</p>

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	12 (Coventry) + 8 (Birmingham)	Generally high support for the smaller vehicle as long as the appropriate risk is assessed at the time of call. General agreement with the proposal to send one person to check an AFA but it must depend on the building. Any risk to property or people will need a full response.	Where there is a risk to people or property, a full response would be sent.
	11 (Wolverhampton) + 6 (Business group)	It's appropriate to research it... excellent idea to research and trial...faster response and get to areas that the larger engines may not be able to...must liaise with the firefighters as part of the research to see what they feel is needed – they are the ones fighting it. It's a good idea but the Service needs to look at risk profile carefully, there is mileage in looking at alternatives as engines can be tied up at false alarms when there are more serious incidents elsewhere.	This proposal is in relation to minor fires and AFA response.
	6 (Business group)	Exemptions would be needed for certain premises ... be seriously concerned if a man on a motorbike turned up for a problem at the hospital...could use risk profiles to establish where the initial response should or could be sent...there is a real risk of under-responding.	
	<b>LETTER (1)</b>	Concern in response to Section 4 (Operational Response) ... very little information included in the document... by the criteria set out many fires will be attended by 'one person to check'. In the	The intention is to investigate alternative means of responding to calls from AFA systems, including the possibility of a single person response.  This would not apply where there is a report of fire, when a full

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	<p><b>EMAIL (1)</b></p> <p><b>FBU</b></p>	<p>event of a fire in hospital premises this is potentially a dangerously inadequate response. Both proposals call for finely balanced judgements by Fire Control staff. The proposed regional call centre cannot be expected to have the same degree of local knowledge, expertise and ownership as the current staff, yet they will be required to exercise a greater degree of judgement regarding severity and validity of incidents.</p> <p>Strongly against proposals to diminish and impair the true effectiveness of a once great Fire Service by bringing in more restrictive and cost cutting policies such as reducing attendance to alarms and rubbish/grass fires. At some stage any organisation has to realise that enough is enough. Provision of public service such as yours requires credible level of funding and resources to deliver service effectively. Changes already made as well as these proposals will erode this confidence.</p> <p>It increases risk to life and property and undermines the standard operating procedures which are supposed to ensure safe systems of work.</p>	<p>response would be sent.</p> <p>A robust system of call handling would be used, to ensure an appropriate response to all calls, with the proviso that a full turnout should be sent, where any uncertainty exists.</p> <p>There would need to be clear protocols established, to manage the mobilisation of any alternative types of incident response.</p> <p>There is no intention to diminish the service's effectiveness. It would be beneficial to our service provision, to be able to extract a proportion of the more minor calls that place a drain on our resources.</p> <p>By freeing up more time for our front-line fleet, we would be able to respond more effectively to serious incidents and have more time available to carry out other essential activities.</p> <p>Addressing the concerns you have raised will form part of the research, before any changes are made to our existing systems of work.</p>
<b>DEFIBRILLATORS</b>	<p><b>FOCUS GROUPS</b></p> <p>12 (Coventry) + 8 (Birmingham)</p>	<p>Some immediately opposed this recommendation with the exception of one participant ... some remained doubtful. How often would it be needed and is it worth the investment? How much is a defibrillator and training for firefighters going to cost? Where do you draw the</p>	<p>There is evidence that a number of lives have already been saved by Fire &amp; Rescue Services that carry defibrillators on their appliances.</p> <p>It is sometimes the case that casualties at fires and other incidents could be saved by the intervention of our personnel making use of a defibrillator, which would justify the investment involved.</p>

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	<p>8 (Birmingham)</p> <p>11 (Wolverhampton) + 6 (Business group)</p> <p><b>EMAIL (1)</b></p>	<p>line? If you need five firefighters to fight a fire, should they be expected to lose one to deal with a cardiac arrest at a fire related incident? Is taking one person away from fighting the fire going to be the best thing to do?</p> <p>General agreement with use of defibrillators provided firefighters are sufficiently trained, however lack of information to make a firm judgement ... would be useful to know how many people would have been saved by having defibrillators on fire engines at RTCs and fires.</p> <p>Do you mean to say that they don't have them now? ... go with it...just assumed it was done already. What happens if they have co-responded and then they have a fire to go to? It's a fantastic idea that needs to be implemented providing it doesn't detract from fighting fires...would be very useful to have them on fire engines.</p> <p>Could you assure everyone that, by possibly introducing defibrillators onto fire appliances, this will not be the thin end of the wedge, and that fire crews will not be expected to attend medical emergencies as either a first or co-responder instead of ensuring a Paramedic is the first on the scene. It would not be right or proper to</p>	<p>We already train our firefighters to a high standard in First Aid and Trauma Management, added to which, the training implications for this equipment would be minimal, when balanced against the potential benefit to the community.</p> <p>There is no intention to use our crews as co-responders instead of ambulance personnel, or to mobilise them for paramedic duties instead of fighting fires. This initiative would be used at incidents where the Ambulance Service were not in attendance and where time is critical to save a life.</p> <p>Our intention is to arrange the introduction of defibrillators onto WMFS vehicles, so that our personnel may have the opportunity to save the lives of people who have gone into cardiac arrest. We will ensure that our staff are given appropriate training to make use of this equipment, as an addition to their existing knowledge and skills in the field of first aid and casualty management. Whilst some brigades (especially those in the more rural and remote areas) are operating co-responder schemes, whereby fire appliances are mobilised as the first response to heart attack victims, that is not our intention. We believe that the West Midlands is served by a</p>

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	FBU	<p>send a service which is obviously nowhere near as suitably equipped in training, experience and life saving resources, i.e. prescription and administration of drugs, as the Ambulance Service. Operational Firefighters will do all they can to reduce the amount of suffering at incidents, but they should not be relied on to fill in gaps that have been allowed to occur in other areas. If fire appliances are expected to attend medical emergencies outside normal fire calls, how would this affect availability of resources for fire and rescue?</p> <p>Before we make any further comment ... we would like to see what the Brigade's proposals are.</p>	<p>modern well-equipped ambulance service that is able to respond effectively to incidents in our area and that will continue to be the case. However, there are occasions when access to a defibrillator at a fire or other incident could make a difference to a casualty's chances of survival. This could equally apply to our own staff. Naturally, there are sometimes occasions when the ambulance service is not in attendance and this policy would afford us the chance to intervene in a professional manner, before they take arrive and assume care of the casualty. For this reason, we intend to introduce this piece of equipment, which is recognised as a valuable contribution to preserving lives in the community.</p>
<b>TECHNICAL RESCUE FACILITY</b>	<b>FOCUS GROUPS</b>  12 (Coventry)          8 (Birmingham)	<p>What is the alternative? What is the current provision? How would a regional centre be able to deal with an incident in a far corner of the region? How is the incident managed?</p> <p>Minority concerned about whether the cost of the Bickenhill centre would draw money from normal Fire Service duties and budgets.</p> <p>It's a good idea however don't chuck loads of money into it if there are not many incidents. Is it a worthwhile expenditure?</p>	<p>The equipment provided for us by the Government under the New Dimension project, has to be made available for use as a local, regional and national asset. Our intention is to make the most effective use of this specialist equipment and the trained staff who are able to operate it, by locating them within a specialist Technical Rescue facility at a strategic location.</p> <p>In this way, we avoid fragmenting the various elements of specialist rescue equipment across the West Midlands area, with the associated inefficiencies incurred by having to train personnel from a number of locations. It also avoids the conflict arising from the</p>

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	11 (Wolverhampton) + 6 (Business group)  FBU	It's a good idea – we can't have these all over the place and it seems to be in the right place...happy with having it all in one place...good place to have it as it's close to the motorway network and the airport.  We are concerned ... it would dilute the skills already acquired for specialist roles ... service provided to the West Midlands community would be diluted.	need to deploy firefighters with specialist skills, when they are already involved at another incident that could be handled by colleagues with a generic skill-base. Much of the funding for this facility has been provided by Government, under its New Dimension programme, to improve national resilience against acts of terrorism and other major incidents.  By expanding our specialist rescue capability, we intend to enhance the quality of rescue service we are able to provide.
<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	<b>FOCUS GROUPS</b>  8 (Birmingham)	It would have been nice to have some information to show why they came to these sorts of decisions.  The proposals are too vague.  It seems like a plan that's been put together because they need to put a plan together.  We need evidence underpinning the proposals to show that they have researched the issues.	It has been noted during this consultation process, that people would prefer to have access to more detailed information on the issues under discussion. Steps will be taken in future, to ensure that this is addressed.  None of the proposals described will be enacted without thorough analysis and investigation of the available options.  The decision to consult on these issues at an early stage, enables us to pave the way for further, detailed examination of our service provision, so that we can continue to modernise our service in line with government expectations and in the interest of effective management of public resources.

Note : At the Birmingham Public Focus Group there were 8 attendees;  
At the Coventry Public Focus Group there were 12 attendees;  
At the Wolverhampton Public Focus Group there were 11 attendees;  
At the Wolverhampton Business Focus Group there were 6 attendees.  
In total 37 attended focus groups facilitated by Opinion Research Services Limited.