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| <b>Notes of the Policy Planning Forum</b> |
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**4 June 2018 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, Brackenridge, Craddock, Davis, Eustace,  
Hogarth, Male, Miks, Spence, Tranter and Walsh
- Officers:** West Midlands Fire Service  
Chief Fire Officer (P Loach)  
Deputy Chief Fire Officer (P Hales)  
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (G Taylor)  
A Asfar, H Begum, B Brook, S Burton, J Campbell, J Connor, M  
Hamilton-Russell, P Fellows, R Houlston, M Pym, P Shergill, N  
Spencer, S Vincent, M Ward-White, S Warnes
- Clerk and Monitoring Officer**  
K Gowreesunker (Clerk)  
S Sahota (Monitoring Officer)  
M Griffiths (Treasurer)
- Apologies:** Councillors Singh Atwal, Barrie, Dehar, Iqbal, Mottram, P.Singh,  
Young
- Observers:** Nil

**10/18 Chair and CFO Announcements**

Cllr John Edwards, Chair of WMFRA, welcomed all attendees to the Policy Planning Forum.

Thankyous were given to the following members for their service:  
Male, T.Singh, P.Singh, B.Douglas-Maul, Vice Chair Idrees, Cartwright,  
Williams, Clinton, G.Singh, Eustace, Booth, Sealey, Mottram, Allcock, Davis.

Confirmation of the following meeting dates were as followed:

|                     |                                       |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Executive Committee | 6 <sup>th</sup> June 2018 at 10:00am  |
| Labour Group        | 18 <sup>th</sup> June 2018 at 10:30am |
| AGM                 | 25 <sup>th</sup> June 2018 at 11:00am |

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### **11/18 Governance Update**

Karen Gowreesunker, Clerk to the Authority, provided a Governance update.

Councils and Cabinets (and subsequently, West Midlands Combined Authority Board) have approved the Governance Scheme, which has been submitted to the Home Office.

A draft order and proposals should be received by September/October 2018. This will be subject to consultation with each Local Government Authority and West Midlands Combined Authority.

Should 'Redline Issues' not be accepted by the Home Office, this will require a review of options to progress governance arrangements with Local Authorities and the WMCA.

It is also feasible that other legislation such as Brexit, being progressed by the Home Office, may delay anticipated timelines previously identified.

### **12/18 Members' Questions**

In answer to the Members' questions, Members sought reassurance that Officers were mindful of the following areas of concerns:

- Mayor to provide his upmost support to deliver red lines.
- The financial experience of Manchester Fire and Rescue Service, during their transition to Mayoral Governance.
- The decisions of WMFRA to manage reserves for budget sustainability and capital expenditures programme.
- The recent press statement by Government on utilisation of reserves, nationally.
- The development of the proposed scheme, safeguards the safety of local communities and places, in a strong service position to maintain the SDM.

### **13/18 Delivering against The Plan 2017/20**

Phil Loach, Chief Fire Officer, delivered a presentation on the progress of the Delivery against The Plan 2017/20.

#### National Framework

The Home Office Fire and Rescue National Framework for England was introduced on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2018. It provides clear direction and expectation for strategic, people and financial planning and assurance based on evidence.

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The framework is a requirement under Section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and, should a Fire and Rescue Authority not be meeting the requirements, sets out powers of intervention.

### Financial Efficiency Plan (FEP)

The Financial Efficiency Plan was presented. The plan is reliant on continual transformation of services and the need to diversify the skills of the workforce as a mechanism to reducing vulnerability. This approach ensures WMFS remains relevant for the future, providing services that effectively and efficiently meet the evolving needs of the community, the maintenance of the SDM and importantly the risk based 5-minute attendance standard for high risk incidents.

| Financial Efficiency Plan |               |               |               |               |             |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
|                           | 2016/17<br>£m | 2017/18<br>£m | 2018/19<br>£m | 2019/20<br>£m | Total<br>£m |
| Staffing                  | 2.1           | 1.3           | 0.4           | 0.2           | 4.0         |
| Alternative Funding       | 0.            | 0.8           | 1.0           | -             | 2.0         |
| Internal Restructures     | 0.4           | 0.6           | -             | -             | 1.0         |
| Service Reductions        | 1.0           | -             | -             | -             | 1.0         |
| Council Tax Base          | 0.9           | 0.4           | 0.4           | 0.3           | 2.0         |
| TOTAL                     | 4.6           | 3.1           | 1.8           | 0.5           | 10.0        |

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

### Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)

Resurgence of importance of the IRMP is noted with revision of the National Framework of FRS' and the new HMICFRS Inspection Regime. Pilot inspections experienced numerous questions being linked back to the establishment of IRMP.

A National Leading Survivability Study was conducted, with scrutiny conducted by Coventry University. The conclusion being that our work is valid and that standards that we sought to supply are being achieved.

Our IRMP supports our integrated approach, provided through our SDM and pursues an evidence based approach to risk management, citing Prevention and Protection to minimise response, thereby ensuring the most vulnerable communities become safer.

Our IRMP was developed following public consultation, to which there was 5,763 responses:

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97% agreed that we should protect our 5-minute response time.

91% agreed that our prevention, protection and response work makes the communities and businesses of the West Midlands Safer, Stronger & Healthier.

81% stated that we should continue to look at alternative ways of bringing in money to support our SDM.

### Our Strategy

The Authority on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017 and 19 February 2018 confirmed its commitment to the delivery of the Integrated Risk Management Plan, through its rolling three-year strategy 'The Plan 2018-2021'.

### Progress in Delivering Strategy

Establishment of a Local Agreement with Representative Bodies was recognised, with alternative funding sought through commissioned services e.g. falls response, promotion of training facilities available etc.

To date, 102 firefighters have been recruited on new contracts and from January 2018, the new entrant profile has significantly increased to 32% female and 32% from BME backgrounds; reflective of the community we serve. We provide fleet availability of 99% and have adopted innovative approaches to staffing; varying fleet between day and night and flexible working.

### Trade Dispute

The 5 points to the trade dispute were outlined:

1. New Entrants Contracts
2. Imposition of Fire Control
3. Interfering with legitimate Trade Union Activity
4. Inducement of Staff
5. Dictatorial Management

With a breakdown of the ballot outcome provided:

- 1170 eligible to vote
- 954 votes casted
- 860 voted Yes
- 93 voted No
- 1 spoilt paper

2 proposed options were presented to Members:

### Option 1- Current Strategy

Continuing with our current strategy would promote the future sustainability of the current SDM, enabling a delivery of £2m component of the Financial Efficiency Plan (FEP). The sustained delivery of such activities would be

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achieved through new entrants and existing volunteers and provide the Authority with longer term opportunities for transformation and sustainability. However, it was felt that this option would lead to a continuation of the Trade Dispute leading to industrial action.

### Option 2 – Revised Strategy

A revision of 'The Plan 2018-2021' would require identification of alternative ways of achieving efficiencies from within the Service. There would be high probability of a requirement to deviate from current SDM and would be a necessity to review the IRMP. The ability to continue to meet our 5-minute risk based attendance standard would become more challenging and may not be achievable. Similarly, the consistent delivery of assertive, effective and safe emergency response is less likely, as resources become more limited and the service becomes less able to meet future financial pressures. For example, any reduction in our SDM would lead to increased attendance times for the second resource in attendance, therefore restricting our ability to deliver an assertive, effective and safe response.

### Financial Impact

Regardless of option selected, there is a need to provide a minimum three months' notice period, to meet the terms and conditions of existing Telecare contracts.

Alternative means of identifying savings through reduced SDM need to be considered and a revised FEP will need to be submitted to the Home Office for approval. Therefore, the current Falls Business Continuity Arrangements will need to be maintained for this notice period at least.

### Legal Implications

Changes to the IRMP may require further consultation and there needs to be notification to the Home Office of potential changes to the FEP. Employment contracts cannot be removed without being replaced and will need to be agreed through collective bargaining.

## **14/18 Members Questions**

Members raised the following comments and questions:

- Cllr Hogarth - supports the approach taken by the Fire Authority so far and that this should remain consistent. Should option 2 be taken it will potentially mean other disputes will arise.
- Cllr Male –
  1. enquired whether there is confidence to find efficiency savings elsewhere within the Service?
  2. the Fire Authority has requested firefighters to accept change whilst also seeking 'redlines' in governance journey – these two approaches are about maintaining strategy
- Cllr Spence – expressed sadness on this issue as the Service has progressed employment reflecting community groupings to good effect,

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and industrial action would not be the right thing to undertake. There would be little benefit to re-consulting on the IRMP as the current Plan remained relevant.

- Cllr Brackenridge –
  1. requested slides be sent in advance. Much detail to receive and could have been sent to Members in advance of PPF. Would be submitting questions after the meeting.
  2. The level of 90% in favour suggested real issues existed and that dictatorial management being raised was concerning; specifically what are the points and the potential resolutions?
  3. Expressed that firefighting is about responding, that has not changed since he was one himself, and that there is a role to expand the role map but the withdrawal from health trials by FBU nationally, illustrated that people need be bought along together and not as substitute for other emergency service providers.
  4. Expressed he would not wish to do this work, this is the work of health authorities, are we acting as a sticking plaster for the NHS. We need to enter negotiations with more focus and discuss and resolve.
- Independent member Mr Ager – cannot live with prospect of industrial action for years, but agreed the Fire Authority has agreed its strategic plan for service delivery.
- Cllr Idrees – cannot understand premise of dispute. The Service and its firefighters should have been proud to continue delivering these services as people only requesting help when in need.
- Cllr Miks – commented that Falls Response in Coventry had been well received locally, provided by volunteers and new entrants and not understandable that FBU should be against. Expressed disappointment that the vote appears to be based upon an issue not specifically outlined in the trade dispute.
- Cllr Eustace – all jobs have elements that people don't like. How often do firefighters respond to Falls and is it sufficient to compromise everything else?
- Cllr Jenkins – agreed that it is disappointing the Service finds itself in such circumstances, however option 2 is doing everything possible to resolve those circumstances and enables a negotiation with the FBU to progress them. Evident that a high number of firefighters do have concerns and the experience of Birmingham City Council in a recent trade dispute illustrated that public will favour their cause.

In response to members' comments and questions, the following summary points were made:

- Efficiency savings are regularly being looked at. Internally there are three options; savings, internal restructure and business Development. However, if we cannot generate the £2 million income, they will be unable to be made elsewhere, due to reductions already made within the Service. We are lean and therefore the service delivery model will be the focus.

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- Returning into Public Consultation will be a necessity, if significant variations are to be made to the SDM and FEP.
- Dialogue surrounding the reasons into why 90% of Firefighters voted for positive action, is advisable.
- Need to ensure clarity by all parties into the role of Employee Relations Framework (ERF) and responsibilities to recognise protocol to manage action.
- Confirmation of remuneration and business continuity arrangements and approx. call out figures for falls response were provided (12-15 per day across three areas – accepting this will grow but strategy has been built to enable this scenario).
- Each Fire and Rescue Service around the United Kingdom has its own contract of employment for implementation of the Firefighter role map.
- Believe role of the fire service is not to wait for people to need to be responded to but to address up stream causes – critical to future of fire service
- Continue with degradation of strategy the fire service nationally will become irrelevant.
- New employment model has attracted people who seek to undertake such work and are attracted to a new and contemporary service, whilst also providing safeguards to existing employees who do not want to provide these services . This has also provided diversity in the increased attraction of female and Black Minority Ethnic recruits.
- Dictatorial management is a generic term used in trade disputes. Feedback during recent SET engagement on stations has indicated that this may have been a feature of the past, but that responses to comments made on internal Service social media (Yammer) may have recently been construed as censorship

The Chair summarised that the presentation had been made as clear as possible. The Fire Authority had done the right thing to pursue a Local Agreement, however this was primarily a national issue and should be resolved as such without detriment to WMFS. The Chair looked to the Fire Minister to understand the scale of opposition and that it advise his approach to change nationally. Following discussion (excepting Dudley and Solihull) with Council Leaders or their Deputies, and subsequently Section 41 members that industrial action should be avoided.

Members were assured that the presentation would be made available in advance of the Executive Committee meeting and submissions of questions prior to this meeting were welcomed. The meeting is open to those who wish to observe.

Members were thanked for attending.

The meeting closed at 12:31 hours.

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**4 June 2018**

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