

<b>Notes of the Policy Planning Forum</b>
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**5 November, 2012 at 10.30 am  
at Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham**

**Present: Members of the Authority**

Councillors Aston, Singh Atwal, Chambers, Clinton, Davies, Davis, Douglas-Maul, Edwards, Eustace, Finnegan, Foster, Idrees, O'Neill, O'Reilly, Quinnen, Singh, Spence, Tranter, Ward, Wright, Yardley and Young; Mr Ager.

**Officers: West Midlands Fire Service**

V Randeniya [Chief Fire Officer];  
Assistant Chief Fire Officers P Hales, P Loach and D Walton; M Griffiths and D Johnson;  
T Embury.

**Clerk and Monitoring Officer**

N Sharma and G Wythes.

**Treasurer**

S Kellas.

**Apologies:** Councillors Hogarth and Walsh.

**21/12 Chair's Announcements**

The Chair reminded members that arrangements had been made for scrutiny training to take place on 7 November 2012 at 2.30 pm at Safeside. All members were encouraged to attend.

He also referred to the recent death of Tony Harris, a fire-fighter with the Service, whose funeral would take place on 6 November 2012.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that a team of five firefighters was currently observing the search and rescue operation following the recent hurricane around New York. Lessons learned would be used to improve the Service's own practices.

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He also reported that he would be leading the emergency services in the Remembrance Day procession at the Cenotaph in London on 11 November, 2012, in his capacity as President of the Chief Fire Officers' Association.

### **22/12 Public Perception of the Fire Service**

The Chief Fire Officer gave a presentation on the results of an external survey of public perceptions of the national Fire Service in relation to performance and public service expenditure cuts. The survey had been commissioned by the Chief Fire Officers' Association. The results of the survey would be of value to the Service in communicating with local communities and in lobbying government.

### **23/12 Brigade Response Vehicles**

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer [Operations] gave a presentation on progress with piloting the introduction of brigade response vehicles [BRVs]. This initiative had come about as part of the Building upon Success programme as a way of improving response capability in a time of reducing budgets and establishment. The key benefits of the initiative would be to accommodate staff reductions and to provide a more agile response to a wide range of incidents. The initiative would work alongside the introduction of dynamic mobilisation to ensure that the right kind of resource was directed to each incident. The BRVs cost substantially less than pump rescue ladders [PRL] and were much more fuel efficient. They were also well equipped and carried a very effective pumping system. The trial was being fully evaluated, taking into account feedback from crews.

The principles of the pilot were in accord with the Authority's stated priorities including the principle of retaining at least one PRL at each fire station. BRVs would not be restricted by incident type. Evaluation of the current pilot scheme indicated that BRVs were mobilised more often than PRLs and had successfully dealt with those incidents, sometimes working in conjunction with PRLs.

Delivery of further BRVs had been taken and they would be operational from 22 October 2012 with an expansion subject to comments from members to increase the range of incidents that a BRV can respond to as part of an initial attendance from 6

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November 2012. A report would be submitted to the Executive Committee in January 2013 proposing to replace all Late Shift and second PRLs with BRVs in a rolling programme taking into account the age of existing PRLs. Members were asked to note that the introduction of BRVs was only part of the approach to meet required cuts, and if cuts were more severe than a flat rate cut for all authorities, additional changes in service would have to be considered.

In response to questions from members, it was confirmed that the latest model of BRV in the pilot was suitable for purpose and would assist in maintaining response targets. Members were asked to assist in communicating this message to local communities in relation to the pilot vehicles.

At the conclusion of the meeting members were invited to view a BRV and ask questions of the crew to assist them familiarising themselves with the vehicle as part of supporting the trial.

(Meeting ended at 12.10 pm)

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