

Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee

13th October, 2014 at 12.30 pm
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Tranter (Chair);
Councillor Spence (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Collingswood, Delaney, Hogarth, Phillips
JP and Young.

Apology: Councillor Skinner.

Observer: Councillor Shackleton.

25/14 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 1st September, 2014 be approved as a correct record.

26/14 **Progress Report Addressing the Recommendations Arising from the Review of Public Consultation**

Further to Minute No. 29/13, the Committee received an update on the Service's progress in addressing the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Committee's review of the public consultation process. The review had specifically targeted the seemingly poor response rate in respect of the consultation undertaken on the 2013/16 Community Safety Strategy.

In addressing the recommendations West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) officers had worked together to determine the most efficient and effective way of delivering the desired outcomes and, as a result, had formulated a strategic approach which encapsulated the recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee review rather than responding to each individual recommendation.

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In was proposed that the recommendations would be delivered through the Community Membership model, the key strategic outcomes from which were to:-

- improve quality of consultation with The Plan and The Community Safety Strategy;
- improve the awareness of the portfolio of work that the Service delivered to its diverse communities;
- increase the public value of how the Fire Service as a public body contributes to local communities; and
- increase the contribution of our diverse communities to shaping The Plan and the Community Safety Strategy and support delivery of our service.

The Community Membership model was based upon the West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) Foundation Trust which had 8,600 members and was designed to provide qualitative feedback to help shape its future service. WMFS officers would engage with its community members through regular newsletters and social media informing them what we are doing and planning to do. This would provide an informative group of diverse community members with whom the Service would confer with when it carried out consultation on the Community Safety Strategy. Officers had identified various methodologies to create a suitable database:

- WMAS Foundation Trust had agreed to share its data base of 8,600 members;
- engagement with Youth Emergency Services Forum (YES) - a strategic partnership initiative started through The Future Melting Pot and WMFS which engaged with seldom heard youth aged 14-21 (40 young people involved);
- WMFS Partnerships - local station partnerships and partnerships through Community Fire Safety;
- Community Engagement strategies through Equality and Diversity Supporting Strategy (DICE); and
- elected members of WMFRA.

The Committee was assured that whilst volunteers were involved and offered advice to make communication more effective, this was not in place or instead of paid staff.

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Members were pleased at the effort and energy that was being employed in engaging with the public and also asked officers to investigate whether information relating to communicating with the Service could be passed to residents either by leaflets through doors or together with Council Tax bills.

27/14 **Work Programme 2014/15**

The Committee noted its work programme for 2014/2015. Further to Minute No. 24/14 (1st September, 2014), members were advised on the current operation of the High Rise training facility.

Prior to the next meeting of the Committee, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer undertook to liaise with the Chief Fire Officer on options which the Committee may wish to consider for future reviews.

(Meeting ended at 1.10 pm)

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