

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

**9th June, 2014 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,
Delaney, Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Finnegan,
Hogarth, Mottram JP, Quinnen, Sealey, Shackleton,
Singh and Spence.
- Officers:** **West Midlands Fire Service**
Chief Fire Officer (P Loach);
Deputy Chief Fire Officer (P Hales);
Director Operations (G Taylor);
Director Resources (M Griffiths);
Director Human Resources (D Johnson);
Group Commander S Barry, Commander B Brook, J Connor,
M Hamilton-Russell.
- Clerk and Monitoring Officer**
N Sharma
R Jones.
- Treasurer**
Stuart Kellas.
- Apologies:** Councillors Davis, Roberts, Tranter and Young;
Mr Ager.

10/14 **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed those members who had been returned following the recent local elections and noted that the Authority would shortly be losing some of its members, including Councillors Chambers, Walsh, Auluck and O'Reilly. Former Councillor Wright had not been reselected for election. He thanked all those members for the contribution which they had made to the Authority.

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He also announced that Councillor Quinnen had had a book published the week after the elections entitled “Starlight in the Ring”.

Members were reminded that the induction date for new members was 7th July, 2014 and that all members were welcomed to attend.

He informed members that two more strike periods had been notified on 12th and 21st June, 2014 and that the Authority was trying to maintain the best relationship it could with employees and trades unions.

The Chief Fire Officer thanked those members who would not be returning to the Authority in the next Municipal Year for their service and in particular to Councillor Chambers for his work as Chair of the Scrutiny Committee and in monitoring quarterly performance.

He also outlined the Service’s stance with regard to the firefighter strike action and indicated that he would update members if the resilience arrangements that were in place became unsustainable.

11/14 Outline of the Reasons to Believe (#RTB) Campaign

Members received a presentation from the Corporate Communications Manager, Mark Hamilton-Russell, on the Service’s Reasons to Believe Campaign (RTB), which was being launched to encourage the public to visit the Service’s website and discover all of the areas of work which the Service undertook. The five Reasons to Believe, i.e. the evidence and facts which substantiated the whole range of activities which the Service was involved in, were linked to the Service’s priorities and objectives and related to Response and Prevention and Protection (what we do) and Communities Partnerships, Resources and People (how we do it).

The presentation also included videos made by individuals and Watches providing information on what the Service did and how it had influenced them.

It was intended that the presentation would be made to new members on their induction day and that in addition to the internet promotion the Campaign would be advertised in a more traditional manner later in the year.

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12/14 WMFS Risk Based Attendance Standards

Members received presentations from Commander Ben Brook (based on response times) and Group Commander Simon Barry (based on Seconds do Count).

With regard to response times, members heard of a research project based on the Service's five minute response time and on work that was being done with insurers to estimate the cost of fire damage per square meter for both residential and commercial properties. Early response to incidents helped to keep these costs down and for homes and businesses to remain operational and viable.

It was reported that some other Services response times had increased and some were as high as 25 minutes. However, the WMFS continued to investigate research projects and other developments which might facilitate getting to people and incidents quicker.

In relation to Seconds do Count, members were informed of the actions undertaken and covered through the Receipt, Reaction and Travel for each incident and that the WMFS had one of the fastest response times in the country. The Service was, however, still trying to improve on its response times and constantly reviewed its effectiveness in case any marginal gains could be made at any stage of the response.

Members were appreciative of all three of the presentations which had been made and of the Service's response times. A question was asked as to what medical action any of the Service's employees might be expected to perform if they were first on the scene at a road traffic accident. It was reported that equipment was available to employees to take any initial medical intervention. Another member commented that he had witnessed that it had taken an ambulance 30 minutes to respond to an emergency call in his area recently.

The Chief Fire Officer commented that Councillor Aston was a paramedic and that he was on the Board of Governance of the Ambulance Trust and that they would report these concerns there. The Service did what it could to aid the Ambulance Service but could only deal with trauma incidents and offer basic life support assistance.

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It was suggested that members might be willing to attend some form of first aid training and the Chief Fire Officer indicated that he would try to provide such an opportunity in the near future.

Members also asked about the partnership work that was undertaken with local authorities with regard to traffic management facilities.

The Chief Fire Officer asked members to feed back to their authorities on these discussions.

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Prevention, Protection, Response Integration Project

The Chief Fire Officer introduced a dvd on proposals to integrate the Service's prevention, protection and response activities into a 'One Team' approach.

Operational crews would continue to give more straightforward fire safety advice to persons and business which they came into contact with, whilst Fire Safety Officers would focus on more complex areas which were classified as higher risk areas due to complex building design, business premises (working with flammable or explosive materials) or legal enforcement activities.

It was hoped that, whilst continuing to provide fire safety advice confidently and to a high standard, Operation One Team would give greater resilience in providing fire safety advice for the people of the West Midlands and ensure that the Service made every contact count.

(Meeting ended at 12 noon)

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

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