

<p><b>Notes of the Policy Planning Forum</b></p>
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**07 September 2015 at 10.45 am  
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham**

**Present:**       **Members of the Authority**  
Councillor Edwards (Chair);  
Councillor Idrees (Vice-Chair);  
Councillors Atwal Singh, Barlow, Barrie, Clinton,  
Davis, Dehar, Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Hogarth,  
Miks, Mottram JP, Quinnen, Sealey, Shackleton, B  
Singh, P Singh, T Singh, Spence, Tranter and  
Young.  
Mr Ager.

**Officers:**       **West Midlands Fire Service**  
Chief Fire Officer (P Loach)  
Deputy Chief Fire Officer (P Hales);  
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (G Taylor);  
M Griffiths, P Wilson, P Shergill, S Timmington  
and S Vincent.

**Clerk and Monitoring Officer**  
K Gowreesunker (Clerk)  
S Sahota (Deputy Monitoring Officer)

**Apologies:**     Councillors Afzal, Aston, Mottram, Skinner and Ward;  
Mr Bell.  
M Dudley.

**Observers:**     A Afsar, M Hamilton-Russell

**12/15   Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the Policy Planning Forum.

The Chair informed the members of Councilor Mottram's continued absence due to ill health which he was now recovering from and all members passed on their best wishes to him.

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The Chair provided an update on the situation surrounding the Police and Crime Commissioner. Political parties have different views regarding this role. However, following the result of the general election, the Conservative government and the Home Office were now progressing this issue and subsequently, a consultation on a Home Office paper is due to be published imminently which features some potentially important changes to the governance arrangements for the Fire and Rescue Service. The Home Office paper will be brought to the full Fire Authority once it has been received.

Additionally, the proposed West Midlands Combined Authority also presents a potential impact on the governance arrangements, particularly with the possibility of an elected mayor being established. The Councils that will make up the combined authority are taking a pragmatic approach to secure maximum devolution. This could pose another question, with the potential for the elected mayor to be given control of the Police and Fire and Rescue Service, for example, it has been announced that Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service will be under the control of the mayor of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the existing Fire Authority will be abolished.

The Chief Fire Officer welcomed everyone to the Policy Planning Forum and thanked all members for their attendance supporting the various station open days over the summer months.

The Chief Fire Officer updated the members on the situation regarding High Speed Two (HS2) rail. A number of objections had been lodged by the West Midlands Fire Service and assurances had been sought regarding the potential impact of HS2 on Headquarters, Safeside and Fire Control. Peter Holland, the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor, has undertaken an independent risk assessment, the findings of which do not support additional funding of a separate Fire Control. DCFO Phil Hales will send a response highlighting the disappointment of West Midlands Fire Service. In the event of any further risks being identified, these will be raised with HS2 and the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor. The Service will continue to assess the possibility of relocating Fire Control, with agreement that the assurances raised will be met.

The Chief Fire Officer acknowledged the developments surrounding the Police and Crime Commissioner, and the West Midlands Combined

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Authority. The combined authority continues to be progressed, and a shadow board has met to determine the way forward. The Chief Fire Officer reminded members that the opportunity remained to raise awareness within their Councils of the contribution of the Fire and Rescue Service to community safety, the health agenda, and economic agenda.

### **Presentations to the Forum**

Two presentations were given to the Policy Planning Forum:

- Performance of Response Attendance Standards
- Fire and Health, the Journey so far...

Additionally, a short video was displayed to the group as part of an update on the Staffing Options.

#### **13/15 Performance of Response Attendance Standards**

Gary Taylor, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, provided a presentation on the performance of the response attendance standards.

The presentation provided an update on the progress made over the last 12 – 18 months.

The service delivery model of West Midlands Fire Service is anchored around the response standards, in particular the 5 minute response standard for category 1 incidents (highest risk). The presentation outlined the timeline of a property fire, from the time the smoke alarm actuates, the occupier investigates, phone call is made, Fire Control handle the call, crew reaction time, travel time, through to the appliance booking in attendance. The timeline had been developed following academic research that had been carried out into survivability. The research demonstrated that survivability is increased if firefighters arrive at the scene early.

It was noted that road traffic collisions are increasing and the response time is critical at these type of incidents, for example, to open a casualty's airway, to use a defibrillator, to enable the fast release of a casualty from a vehicle so they can be transported to hospital (within the 'golden hour').

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Historically, attendance standards have slowly increased over the last 4 years and as a result, this area was identified as an area for improvement. Hence, a thematic review was commissioned. Outcomes of the review included:

- Improved utilisation of the Service's blended fleet, for example, Brigade Support Vehicles attending automatic fire alarms and secondary fires, protecting PRL's for category 1 incidents, to allow a more timely and effective response.
- The installation of Tom Tom's in appliances which help crews respond quickly, providing live data and plotting the fastest routes to incidents, avoiding road works for example.
- Improved knowledge of topography was identified as a factor contributing to a faster response, and the understanding and local knowledge of areas has been increased.
- Policy and procedures have been reviewed including the Service's mobilising policy, taking a balanced approach, for example, allowing crews to don personal protective equipment en-route.

A video displaying examples of best practice regarding mobilizing was displayed to the group. The best practice video was the start of the campaign which attempted to identify what differences there around the Service and to develop a more joined up approach in terms of practice.

Performance in quarter 1 2015/16 witnessed the response time for category 1 incidents reduce to 4 minutes 43 seconds. It was noted that the method in which this performance indicator is measured has changed. Following extensive liaison with the Office for National Statistics, the performance indicator is now measured using the median, rather than the average. Although this has had an effect on the performance measured, if the average was used, the performance would be recorded as 4 minutes 59 seconds which remains excellent performance (a 40 second decrease) and meets the target.

To celebrate this success, a video has been developed to share with the public, and internally with staff, which was shown to the group.

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The Service will continue to reduce the response times, focusing on call handling by Fire Control and pre-alert which allows firefighters to get on the appliance whilst Fire Control are collecting the information from the caller.

Performance will continue to be measured with any instances where the response times are over the target being flagged and any issues being identified and resolved.

The following points were raised in discussion following the presentation:

- The average time responding to incidents on the motorway network may be longer (note: exact figures were not available at the meeting). However, West Midlands Fire Service has policies in place, and has established relationships with the Motorway Police and the Highways Agency. Procedures include appliances using the hard shoulders and utilising reverse flow. A number of fire stations are positioned close to the motorway network including Oldbury and Solihull.
- Members were impressed by the work to improve response times and the resulting performance. No Fire and Rescue Service has better response times. Attendance standards have been relaxed in other parts of the country. London Fire Brigade have recently increased their response time from 5 minutes to 5 minutes 30 seconds. However, it is important that other Fire and Rescue Services are not criticised as every Service will have its own integrated risk management plan and specific variations in service delivery, for example rural areas more reliant on staffing under the retained duty system.
- Local Authorities do assist with improving response times via engineering, education and enforcement. However, it was noted that as a result of cuts to budgets, funding had decreased in road safety.
- Brigade Response Vehicles have played an important part in reducing response times, being used more significantly for lower risk fires / incidents.
- The change in the way performance is measured in liaison with the

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Officer for National Statistics is not reflected across other Fire and Rescue Services. However, this reflects the fact that there is no standard method of measuring performance within the Fire sector and Fire and Rescue Services use different models.

- Improvements in the attendance times for the second appliances (where applicable) have also improved.
- The Service manages and reduces risk in those areas which witness longer attendance times as part of an integrated approach, for example, via Fire Safety Officers engaging with site owners / responsible persons.
- The Service is confident that its fire stations are in the correct locations, as evidenced within the integrated risk management plan. However, it is worthy of note that fire stations are just a base from which the crews operate, and that they are urged to be out within the community.
- Fire Control manage cover if appliances are not available, for example already attending an incident, ensuring a sufficient and effective operational response is always available.

### **14/15    Staffing Options Update**

The Chief Fire Officer provided an update on the staffing options to the members.

The Fire Brigade Union has agreed to the proposals made by West Midlands Fire Service of a trial of the use of additional shifts at flat rate, with a 25% disturbance allowance. The Fire Brigade Union will shortly take this proposal to their membership for their consideration.

The Chief Fire Officer presented a short video of the initial stages of a real incident captured via the helmet camera of the Incident Commander which was welcomed by the members and provided a real insight into what operational crews face on a daily basis. The following points were raised in discussion prompted by the video:

- The Incident Commander and crew were extremely professional and effective at this incident.

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- The helmet camera used is currently being trialed.
- All firefighters are medically trained, as was evident from the video.
- Such videos may only reach small numbers of people, whereas fire station open days can reach wider audiences and features such as chip pan demonstration units are an effective method of informing members of the public.
- Videos can be a much more dynamic method of relaying information, rather than other methods which can be quite dry. The Service is seeking to utilize further videos in the future.

### **15/15 Fire and Health, the Journey so far...**

S Vincent, Strategic Enabler Community Risk Management, introduced a presentation entitled 'Commissioning, Fire as a Health Asset', and provided some background to the current position of both the Fire and Rescue Service, and the health sector:

- West Midlands Fire Service is currently facing a £14 million budget deficit over the next 3 – 4 years and is identifying options to enable savings. Commissioning represents one such opportunity.
- Simon Stevens, Chief Executive of NHS England, has developed the NHS 5 Year Forward View which outlines a radical upgrade in prevention and public health.
- The increase in prevention outlined by the NHS is in line with the prevention agenda already embedded within the fire sector.
- The RSA (Royal Society for the Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce) report, 'Managing Demand: Building Future Public Services' highlighted where the Fire and Rescue Service should be working within the health sector.

As part of the presentation, P Shergill, Strategic Enabler DICE, discussed commissioning:

The Audit Commission has identified 3 key points which identifies commissioning:

- Specifying services

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- Securing services
- Monitoring services

Commissioning is when West Midlands Fire Service delivers services on behalf of other public sector organizations and being economically rewarded for it. This exchange needs to have a positive impact on the communities through the improvement of the social value and the quality services delivered meeting commissioning outcomes.

West Midlands Fire Service will:

- Continue to deliver our service delivery model
- Continue to deliver front line services, providing more value to the public sector
- Understand the relationship between fire and health, fully understanding the prevention background ('the causes of the causes')
- Demonstrate that the Service understands the outcomes sought by the health sector (shared outcomes)
- Move relationships and partnerships to commissioned services, involving amongst others, Health and Wellbeing Boards, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Directors of Public Health, Public Health England, and the Royal Society for Public Health
- Provide a trusted brand

S Vincent explained the journey of West Midlands Fire Service in terms of prevention, outlining developments including Home Fire Risk Assessments, Home Safety Checks, Serious Incident Review, Making Every Contact Count, and the Marmot endorsement.

S Vincent concluded the presentation early due to lack of time. The second part of the presentation will be delivered at the next meeting of the Policy Planning Forum.

(Meeting ended at 12:25 am)



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