

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

**10 October 2016 at 10.30 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham**

Present: Members of the Authority
Councillor Edwards (Chair)
Councillor Idrees (Vice Chair)
Councillors Allcock, Atwal Singh, Barlow, Barrie, Bennett, Booth, Brackenridge, Cartwright, Clinton, Craddock, Dad, Davis, Eustace, Hogarth, Sealey, B Singh, P Singh, T Singh, Skinner, Spence, Tranter, Walsh and Young
Mr Ager.

Officers: West Midlands Fire Service
Deputy Chief Fire Officer (P Hales)
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (G Taylor)
M Griffiths (Treasurer),
A Afsar, J Connor, K Harris, M Lewis, S Timmington,

Clerk and Monitoring Officer

K Gowreesunker (Clerk)
S Sahota (Monitoring Officer)

Apologies: Councillors: Aston, Mottram
Mr Ager
Chief Fire Officer (P Loach)

Observers: Nil

18/16 Chair and CFO Announcements

The Chair and Deputy Chief Fire Officer welcomed all attendees to the Policy Planning Forum.

The Fire Peer Challenge was due to commence the week commencing 17 October with the visit due to take place over four days. Members were reminded that Lead Members and Deputies, plus members of the two minority political groups, had been invited to a focus group with Councillor Rebecca Knox, Dorset and Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service, who was the lead political members of the peer challenge team.

The deadline for nomination forms to be submitted for the Reward and Recognition event was 14 October.

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Members were reminded that any outstanding skills grids needed to be completed and returned.

An update was provided on the progress of the Future Governance Working Group:

- Policing and Crime Bill was due to be passed in January 2017.
- Discussions had been held with the Police and Crime Commissioner, the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), and the Labour mayoral candidate. It was noted that the Authority would be happy to hold similar discussions with all of the mayoral candidates should they be requested.
- Whilst the pending Policing and Crime Bill will provide a mayor with the legislative route to take on the governance of a FRA, currently there is no legislative route for the Authority to come under an elected mayor.
- As a result, the possibility of including such an option within any second devolution agreement, allowing for The Authority to have closer collaboration with WMCA, was being explored.
- The second devolution agreement would be explored during the autumn and winter period of 2016/17.

Members were informed that the Chief Fire Officer had accepted the role of Chief Executive Officer of Public Sector Reform, which would report into the WMCA.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that Station Commander Lee Baker had received an award for bravery at the 'Brummies' awards event in recognition of the rescue of a family whilst on holiday in Mexico.

The National Breathing Apparatus Challenge had been held at the Fire Service College. Watch Commander Stephen Franklin had received best leading officer.

The national competition for Fire Cadets had been hosted by WMFS during the weekend and Wednesbury Fire Cadets had been awarded British Champions. The Fire Cadets would be going forward to represent the UK at the CITF International Young Firefighter Games in Austria during 2017, along with Frome Fire Cadets of Devon & Somerset FRS who would be the second representative.

19/16 Fire Cadets

Mitchell Lee and Rob Turner, firefighters based at Bloxwich, joined by volunteer instructors Ben Herd and Alex Owen, Fire Cadet Ryan Dean,

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and a teacher of a local school, delivered a presentation on the Fire Cadets scheme:

Mitchell informed Members that the scheme at Bloxwich Fire Station had been started in 2015. The scheme was aimed at young people aged 11 to 16 years old. The Fire Cadets were trained to essentially do what firefighters do; they are taught skills including Breathing Apparatus and health and safety, along with community and community safety.

Approximately 10 students from Walsall College had been trained as volunteer instructors to assist with the running of the scheme. One of the aims of the scheme was that Fire Cadets would train to become volunteer instructors themselves, not only feeding back into the scheme, but also allowing them to receive support whilst they are at college, and helping with any difficulties at home and with peers.

As part of the scheme, there was a want to something different with the cadets and how to help in the community. This was achieved by building relationships with local schools, enabling cadets to be recruited from those schools. Two courses had been held so far during 2016, working with disadvantaged youth.

Two Fire Cadet Instructors and volunteers, Ben Herd and Alex Owen, informed Members about their experiences, how the courses had increased their confidence levels and those of the young people who attended the courses, as well as improving skills including team work and discipline.

Ryan Dean, a Fire Cadet at Bloxwich, informed Members about his experiences whilst on the scheme and how it had helped him.

Lisa Moran, a teacher at one of the schools that is involved with the scheme, informed Members how the scheme had proved to be a huge success. Lisa managed a learning hub which was where pupils with education issues interact with school. Approximately eight pupils had attended the Fire Cadets scheme and their grades had rapidly increased, along with their own personal development. The learning hub became the highest achieving hub in the county on the back of the improvement achieved by the pupils participating in the Fire Cadets scheme.

In answer to Members questions, the following points were raised:

- The scheme was open to young people in general. The route that was taken, to engage with select schools / pupils, was chosen to achieve a quick impact on society.
- There are 13 Fire Cadet units across the Service, with access open to all. Young people gain from becoming Fire Cadets and then give back as volunteer instructors.

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- When setting up a new unit, local need and demand is looked at. It would be great achievement to have a Fire Cadet unit on every fire station.
- Information on the number of young people the Service interacts with is provided to the Government.
- A young person will finish the Fire Cadet scheme when they are 16 years old but not be able to join WMFS until they are 18. However, they would be eligible to train as an instructor and volunteer at a unit. This not only allows an individual to remain in contact with WMFS, but to also gain a good level of education e.g. at college.
- An important ingredient of the success of a unit is to get the local community involved e.g. a number of parents are involved with the Handsworth Fire Cadets.

Councillor Young, who had asked that the Fire Cadets attend the Policy Planning forum, noted that whilst in attendance at a local partnership meeting, the Councillor and the other attendees were informed about the scheme. This resulted in the attendees attending the unit at Bloxwich fire station to see what the Fire Cadets did and to find out more. All were incredibly impressed with what they witnessed. As a result, the group knew that could support the unit by applying for funding.

Councillor Ward, Walsall MBC, who had been invited to attend by Councillor Young noted that all present were aware of the cuts to youth services and that as a result, such schemes were very important. The Councillor encouraged all Members to visit their local fire stations and to find out if they have Fire Cadet units.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer noted the excellent work that had been carried out. Indeed, the Fire Cadets scheme had been run in WMFS for 30 years. There was work being carried out nationally exploring areas such as a national uniform for Fire Cadets. There was a Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) group leading nationally to provide a single voice.

20/16 CFOA Change Programme and Fire Service Inspectorate

Phil Hales, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, delivered a presentation on the CFOA Change Programme:

Following the transfer of national Fire policy from the Department of Local Government to the Home Office in January 2016, and following the announcement of the continuation of the Fire Reform Programme in May 2016, the role of CFOA was looked at, including if it could be more aligned to that of the Police which had already gone through reform. However, it was found that CFOA was more fragmented e.g. by

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the time a person had taken on the role of president and the relationships and networks were in place, the person would move on, with a new president assuming the role.

CFOA consulted with its members at the start of 2016, responding to the consultation in June 2016. CFOA's response to the change programme included proposed changes to adapt the organisation to better reflect the fire sector in speaking with Government and other parties. The changes included:

- FRS Council to be renamed the National Fire Chiefs Council
 - Recommended that it would be redesigned to follow the reform undertaken by the former Police Chiefs Council, and for it to be re-named, mirroring the Police's National Police Chiefs Council
 - Each FRS would continue to be represented
 - An annual plan would be developed
- The CFOA directorates would be replaced by co-ordinating committees enabling greater influence (with each committee to be headed up by a Senior Fire Officer)
- The term of the CFOA president to be extended to three years, rather than the current one year term, and will be renamed as the Chair. This would allow greater consistency and a longer period to build relationships with stakeholders
- The CFOA Chair would be supported by two Vice Chairs.
- There would be a single membership for an organisation and no longer individual memberships.
- The intention would be for the changes to be implemented by April 2017, when the current president will stand down.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer provided an update on the Fire Service Inspectorate:

An independent inspection of the Fire Service was an element of the Policing and Crime Bill. This function was currently undertaken in the form of the Operational Assessment (OpA) and Fire Peer Challenge, which was supported by CFOA and the Local Government Association (LGA). The Policing and Crime Bill would introduce a requirement for a Fire Service Inspectorate which would sit with the Home Office.

The Home Office had approached Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) to develop an inspectorate for fire. Additionally,

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Blue Light Works had also been approached, although that organisation were yet to provide any information.

HMIC had developed an option based around the PEEL programme (the police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy programme). It was noted that the Fire and Rescue Service was not short of assurance, for example Fire Authorities, Scrutiny arrangements, the Statement of Assurance. An analysis of the PEEL programme and OpA had identified that the majority of the processes and areas examined overlapped although the terminology used might differ. HMIC recognised that the processes the Fire and Rescue Service had in place was very good and acknowledged that the Police could learn from these.

OpA and the Fire Peer Challenge were seen as key components and complimentary to the process but will be separate to the inspectorate.

In developing and agreeing the inspectorate, HMIC had developed a set of principles:

- No new extra burden
- Recognise existing assurance
- No new money
- Must be proportionate
- All FRS will be inspected
- New Independent Standards Board
- Reform will be central

In terms of timelines, the options would be presented to the Home Office in November 2016, with agreement to be reached in the December. Pilot inspections would be due to commence in April 2017, with the aim that all Fire and Rescue Services would be subject to a full inspection by 2020.

In response to Members' questions, the following points were raised:

- In answer to a question of where would the elected mayor fit in with the proposals, it was noted that the LGA had asked the same question:
 - Under the HMIC, inspections are purely for the Police, not the Police and Crime Commissioner. However, there was a difference with Fire and Rescue Services due to the Fire Authorities being responsible for delivery of the service.

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HMIC had stated that they would not be looking at Fire Authorities but the actual Services.

- There would be a need to look at governance arrangements including any potential new ones, and it will need to be determined how one inspectorate would cover all the different governance models (it was noted that this was unlike OpA and the Fire Peer Challenge which did examine leadership and corporate capacity).

The meeting closed at 11:58 hours.

<p>Contact Officer: Stephen Timmington Strategic Hub West Midlands Fire Service 0121 380 6680</p>
