

## Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

**12 June 2017 at 1030 hours**

**Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham**

**Present:** Members of the Authority  
Councillor Edwards (Chair)  
Councillor Idrees (Vice Chair)  
Councillors Allcock, Barrie, Booth, Cartwright, Clinton, Craddock,  
Eustace, Mottram, Sealey, P Singh, T Singh, Singh-Atwal, Skinner,  
Spence, Walsh, Young, Male, Miks, Williams

**Officers:** West Midlands Fire Service  
Chief Fire Officer (P Loach)  
Deputy Chief Fire Officer (P Hales)  
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (G Taylor)  
M Griffiths (Treasurer)  
A Afsar, J Campbell, P Shergill, S Warnes, M Hamilton-Russell

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

**Apologies:** Councillors Aston, Brackenridge, Dad, Davis, Hogarth, B Singh,  
Tranter, Mr Ager

**Observers:** Nil

### 13/17 Chair and CFO Announcements

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the Policy Planning Forum and acknowledged the following new members; Councillors Male, Douglas-Maul, Miks and Williams.

The departing Councillors Singh, Skinner, Dad and Bennett were thanked for their service to the Authority.

The Chair had recently written to the 7 Metropolitan District Council Leaders to request their reaffirmation of their support for the reformation of the Fire Authority. Responses were awaited from Birmingham, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton, and members were asked to pursue the responses.

The CFO gave an update on the postponed Reward & Recognition Awards. It will now be held on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2017 at St Martin's Church.

17 New Recruits will be inducted into the Service on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2017 at Woodgate Community Fire Station and the CFO invited Members to the event to welcome them.

The Service had also recently recruited a female member to the ISAR (International Search and Rescue) Team.

Through the Charity Car Wash days, just over £15K had been raised for the Fire Fighters Charity. Fallings Park had raised the most in the UK.

#### 14/17 **Route Map to Mayor – future governance**

The Chair gave an update to Members following discussions with the West Midlands Mayor.

Further updates will be provided to Members as and when the matter progresses.

#### 15/17 **Local Collective Agreements**

The CFO delivered a presentation and update on the Local Agreement Framework.

The Service has implemented innovative ways of working to manage a reduction in central funding, largely supported by the delivery of wider healthcare commissioned services.

Following communication from the National Joint Council, it had been recognised that the current Emergency Response Trials are set to cease if there is no improvement on the proposed 1% pay cap. The number of fire related incidents have declined and our emergency response standards have made a difference to the local communities. This now prompts the formation of a local agreement to enable to continue delivery of the WMFS strategy, prior to the trials ending as this potentially could cause a breach of contract and a reluctance to re-engage with our Service.

This will be enabled through a progressive approach through management and staff negotiations and will be reporting back to the Authority upon completion.

Business Continuity Arrangements are also being considered.

#### 16/17 **Arson Case Study**

The Strategic Enabler for Prevention, Jason Campbell delivered a presentation relating to the performance overview during 2016/17.

- Average attendance time was 4 minutes and 44 seconds.
- There had been a reduction in accidental non-domestic fires, largely helped using Business Support Vehicles.
- Also, a reduction in accidental dwellings fires, with WMFS bucking the trend nationally.
- Safe and Well visits currently at 42%, the target was 180,000 and the Service have completed 215,000 points. The Service have now increased the target to 50%.

Arson cases were specifically discussed:

- 4749 arson incidents in 2016/17 with these incidents representing 47% of the all fires that were responded to. This is a 21% increase on the previous year.
- There has been an increase in primary arson incidents across all 7 brigades.
- 6 deaths can be attributed to arson.
- There is a combined impact on both the community and economically.

Statistics outlining arson in dwellings, non-domestic, vehicle and derelict buildings were given.

### **Arson Fires in Dwellings**

- Coventry are currently over performing and discussions with Operations Commander will be taking place to establish why they are having success in combating these types of incidents.
- The number of arson fires in dwellings has been steadily reducing over the previous 4 years, but with a slight increase of 7 incidents to 205 incidents in 2016/17.

### **Arson Fires in Non-Domestic Properties**

- Prior to 2016/17, the number of arson fires in non-domestic properties had remained relatively static. However, in the last reporting year there has been a 52% increase on the 3-year average to 189 across the West Midlands.
- Operational crews spent a total of 7643 hours at arson fires in non-domestic properties in 2016/17.
- A large proportion of these incidents can be attributed to HMP Birmingham and it is envisaged that there may be a further increase when the smoking ban in prisons is introduced.

### **Arson Vehicle Fires**

- Over the previous 5 years, arson vehicle fires have increased by 62% and this upward trend has been predicted to continue.

- In 2016/17, there were 913 incidents which is a 26% increase on the previous year.
- Operational crews spent a total of 3570 hours at arson vehicle fires in 2016/17.

### **Arson Fires in Derelict Buildings**

- Arson fires in derelict buildings have been static over the previous 4 years, however there has been a 46% increase in these incidents (equating to 197 incidents in 2016/17).
- Operational crews spent a total of 1166 hours at arson fires in derelict buildings.
- The biggest increase has been in the Sandwell and Dudley Council areas, having a 75% increase on the 3-year average (89 incidents occurring).

With regards to this, the following actions are being undertaken:

- There will be a thematic arson review, led by Jason Campbell, which will help the Service understand the cause and impact these incidents.
- This will take a collaborative and centralised approach with Fire Authority members, West Midlands Police, Local Authorities and partner organisations, pooling knowledge, resources and expertise to look at the root cause of arson and ways that it can be tackled.
- This will be in combination with an Arson Reduction Strategy.
- Assurance for this will be obtained through quarterly reports.

### **Sandwell College Case Study**

Following frequent targeted attacks at the disused Sandwell College, Fire Authority members worked with the council to act and serve a Section 215 notice on the owners. This ensures that the building is made safe and secure and this has resulted in attacks ceasing.

Members of the Fire Authority were asked to assist in the aim of reducing arson incidents, by using their influence and connections to create similar systems within their own local authority areas. Details of how this can be achieved will be distributed in due course.

The meeting closed at 1153 hours.

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**Strategic Hub**

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