

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

**4 February, 2013 at 10.00 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham**

- Present:** **Members of the Authority**
Councillor Edwards (Chair);
Councillor Idrees (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Aston, Singh-Atwal, Auluck, Chambers,
Clinton, Davies, Davis, Delaney, Douglas-Maul,
Eustace, Finnegan, Foster, Hogarth, O'Neill,
O'Reilly, Quinnen, Sealey, Singh, Spence, Tranter,
Yardley and Young.
Mr Ager.
- Officers:** **West Midlands Fire Service**
Chief Fire Officer V Randeniya;
Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer P Loach;
Assistant Chief Fire Officers P Hales and G Taylor (Acting);
Director Resources Mike Griffiths;
Director Human Resources David Johnson.
- Clerk and Monitoring Officer**
N Sharma, S Hancock and S Suthi-Nagra.
- Apology:** Councillor Wright.

5/13 Chair's and Chief Fire Officer's Announcements

Further to Minute No. 2/13 the Chair reported that at their meeting on 23 January, 2013, the district leaders had given their support to the Authority implementing a precept increase equivalent to £5 per annum per Band D household. This would support the Authority in maintaining its current response standards and developing its service delivery model. The Chair confirmed that the Labour group would be supporting this option at the Authority meeting on 18 February, 2013.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that Sir Ken Knight had now finished his term as Chief Fire and Rescue Services Advisor and his replacement was Peter Holland. Peter Holland was also Chair of the National Fire Sprinkler Network which would provide the Authority with a useful ally in its campaign for the wider use of sprinklers.

Sir Ken Knight was continuing with his review into the operational efficiency of fire and rescue authorities in England; however West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service (WMFRS) was not one of the 15 brigades that he had selected to visit. There was opportunity for every brigade to submit evidence to the review team though and the Authority would be consulted on what evidence WMFRS would submit. It was hoped that the final report on the review would be made available publicly.

6/13 Management Review

Acting Assistant Fire Officer [Operations] outlined the findings of a management review which had commenced in the summer of 2012. The review aimed to deliver improved services in addition to making savings. A range of research and analysis techniques had been used to gather evidence from all levels of management.

Members were informed of the proposals as a result of the review, which would deliver savings of £1.4 million. Analyses of the Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) and impact assessments had been undertaken on each of the proposals, as well as engagement with partners. Moving forward, the proposals would mean a different way of working for the Service; however officers were confident that front-line service delivery would be maintained.

A report on the review and the detailed proposals would be submitted to the Authority at its meeting on 18 February, 2013.

Members congratulated officers for undertaking such a comprehensive and wide-ranging review using only in-house resources.

7/13 Stop, Make, Buy, Ally

Further to Minute No. 16/12 (23 July, 2012) members received an update on the Stop, Make, Buy, Ally (SMBA) initiative. The initiative had identified a number of areas across the organisation where savings could be generated totaling £2.3 million. A number of other options to generate savings had also been identified for further investigation outside of the SMBA process.

Members noted that a significant proportion of the savings identified were in Human Resources. The Chief Fire Officer responded that the Service's HR function was not like most other organisations because of the training requirements for operational staff, which meant that the HR budget was much larger. Training remained a significant priority for the Service; however, consideration was being given to delivering training as effectively as possible.

The Chair reminded members that the freeze on firefighter recruitment had resulted in the largest area of savings and that this had also prompted the Service to look at alternative crewing models. Moving forward, it was important that the Authority had the ability to increase its baseline budget to protect front-line services from further erosion and the increase in precept in 2013/2014 would contribute significantly to this.

Members were reassured that a number of consultation meetings had been held with the representative bodies on specific changes affecting staff throughout the course of the review.

8/13 Community Safety Strategy – Outcome of Consultation and Impact on the Community Safety Plan

Further to Minute No. 4/13 (7 January, 2013) members were briefed on the outcome of the public consultation process on the Service's Community Safety Strategy (its Integrated Risk Management Plan).

Despite a pro-active consultation, with numerous events taking place in each command area, only 0.11% of the community had responded.

The community had been asked to respond to seven specific questions in the consultation and members were informed of the overall theme of the responses that had been received to each question. Overall the responses were supportive of the Service's approach and had not resulted in any significant changes to the strategy.

Officers assured members they were satisfied that there had been a balance of responses received. However, some work would be undertaken to look at reasons for the poor response rate.

The draft strategy would be submitted to the Authority at its meeting on 18 February, 2013 for comments and the final strategy would be submitted to the Authority at its meeting in April, 2013.

(Meeting ended at 12.15 pm)

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