

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

**6 June 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 Afzal, Aston, Atwal Singh, Barlow, Barrie, Booth,
Brackenridge, Clinton, Craddock, Davis, Eustace, Hogarth,
Mottram, Sealey, B Singh, P Singh, T Singh, Skinner, 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 (Treasurer) M Hamilton-Russell, P Shergill,
S Vincent, N Griffiths, S Barry, J Connor

Clerk and Monitoring Officer

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

Apologies: Councillors: Allcock, Bennett, Dad, Cartwright,
M Dudley (Monitoring Officer)

Observers: M Pym

10/16 Chair and CFO Announcements

The Chair congratulated Gary Taylor on his appointment to the role of Assistant Chief Officer following the Appointment Committee held on 2 June 2016.

Councillor Kate Booth from Birmingham and Councillor Greg Brackenridge from Wolverhampton were welcomed to their first meeting following their appointment to the Authority.

Members noted that Councillor Seamus Walsh from Coventry would be returning to the Authority and Councillors Basharat Dad and Andy Cartwright had been appointed from Birmingham, Councillor Keith Allcock from Sandwell and Councillor Oliver Bennett from Walsall would be joining the Authority.

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The Chair informed Members that the Annual General Meeting was scheduled to take place on Monday 27 June at 1100 hours. The Schools Quiz Final was due to take place on Saturday 9 July at 1100 hours at Safeside and all Members were invited to attend. An email would be circulated with the details of this event.

Members were also informed of the Induction Day to be held on Monday 11 July commencing at 0930 hours at Fire Service Headquarters. This all-day meeting would include lunch and an opportunity for new members to meet the Strategic Enabling Team. All Members were asked to note the date and to attend this important meeting as it would include a number of presentations that would be of value to all Members of the Authority.

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) also congratulated ACO Gary Taylor on his appointment and welcomed new and returning Members. The CFO looked forward to continuing the good work that had been achieved over the last twelve months including maintenance of risk based attendance, continuing with the strategy of the five minute attendance time and supporting Regional, National and International resilience.

The International Search and Rescue (ISAR) Team had recently been re-accredited and had received an Outstanding Reaccreditation for Command and Control. This was particularly pleasing as West Midlands is responsible for the Control function. The CFO would pass on the Authority's congratulations to the Team on their achievement.

It was stated that the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority had been confirmed as having achieved Observer Status on the West Midlands Combined Authority. The Combined Authority had appointed the Fire Service as the Lead Agency for the Troubled Individuals Project and Area Commander Simon Shilton would be taking up this important role under the leadership of ACO Taylor.

The CFO thanked all the Members and their Councils for the support the Fire Authority had received in achieving this status.

The Staffing and Fire Control dispute had been resolved and the CFO thanked ACO Taylor and his staff together with representatives of the Fire Brigades Union and Fire Officers Association for their hard work in achieving a resolution and enabling the Service to deliver the risk based attendance standard. A detailed presentation on Staffing would follow a presentation by Karen Gowreesunker, Clerk to the Authority and Strategic Enabler for Strategic Hub on Governance and potential external changes.

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11/16 The Future Governance for West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

Karen Gowreesunker, Clerk to the Fire Authority, welcomed Members and new Members to the Policy Planning Forum and delivered a presentation on The Future of Governance for West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA).

Change is constantly on the horizon and this is the case in all that the Fire Service does and the recent move back to the Home Office is just one example and quite a significant change for fire.

The presentation outlined where the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) is at the current time and given the changes that have and are still emerging regarding pending legislation, local public service changes and the Fire Service move from the Department of Local Government and Communities to the Home Office. The presentation set out how the Authority would seek to understand how it needs to move forward as an Authority, in a way that signals the intent to conform to Home Office expectations around reform, but also maintaining its ownership of governance and commitment to service delivery for communities.

The government has made 'change' clear in the direction they are setting nationally for the public sector and more specifically for the Fire Authority across the fire sector. Amongst other things demonstrable public service reform is clearly on the agenda, as is the need for increased scrutiny, accountability and transparency of decisions made and actions taken. Theresa May's announcement on 24 May 2016 confirmed the direction for fire and rescue authorities.

The changing government landscape is complex, but provides opportunities, and there is a clear change and sense of direction from The Chief Fire Officers' Association who are working closely with the Home Office to adopt an approach for fire nationally, which will see the instigation of a National Fire Chiefs Council. A model which closely reflects the National Police Council.

From a governance perspective, the Police and Crime Bill which is expected to become an Act by December 2016, provides a police and crime commissioner with the ability to make a business case to take on the governance of fire. The Authority continues in its efforts, led by AMFRA, to influence this Bill, however to date the proposed amendments passed through Bill scrutiny committees have not been successful.

The West Midlands PCC publicly maintains an agnostic view regarding these proposed powers not revealing any definite intentions regarding a business case for WMFS.

The Combined Authority is near its vesting and the Authority have successfully secured a place at the table as an observer, to ensure its involvement and influence in discussions.

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The promise of a mayor to accompany devolution of money and powers and the existing case around the combination of fire (known as regionalisation) provides many opportunities for the Authority that will enable it to continue with the effective delivery of current and future priorities as set out in the 3 year rolling strategy, in a value for money way.

Both Shropshire and Warwickshire councils are currently non-constituent members of WMCA. Both of these cover neighbouring FRs which have formed part of previous combination considerations. The WMCA and Mayor could mean that combination is possible in the future.

The Authority have been very clear in the relationships and alliances it has built at a political and officer level, and even more in communications, the Authority sees greater benefit from aligning to the WMCA and Mayor, to ensure the most effective approach to governance for WMFS and its communities, as well as ensuring the best platform for the delivery of services and critically the maintenance of the Service Delivery Model, which underpins everything.

The timeline below demonstrates that the pace of change is faster than ever, with the most significant milestones that will affect the journey being reached within the next 12 months:

May 2016 – Dec 2016	Jan 2017 – May 2017	June 2017 – May 2020
PCC Elections	PCC Business Case?	PCC Elections 2020?
Mayoral Candidates	CFOA change – NFCC	
Police and Crime Bill	Mayoral elections 4 May	
Devolution		
Fire Inspectorate		
OPA Peer Review		

The Police and Crime Bill is likely to become an Act later this year, which then enables the police and crime commissioner to make his business case for WMFS. This case does need local agreement but still has a route to the Secretary of State and an independent review process if agreement is not reached.

Mayoral elections for the WMCA will take place in May 2017, providing the Authority with an opportunity to influence candidates this summer prior to the Police and Crime Bill coming into an Act.

The Chief Fire Officers Association change programme will take effect from April 2017.

After these 12 months the Authority will see implementation of legislation and changing governance bodies for fire services.

Amongst these key elements Theresa May has made clear that an inspectorate will be established for fire and it is likely that this will come into effect as soon as possible.

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The Operational Assurance (OpA) Peer Review will take place in October and governance and strategic leadership will be a core element of this, providing greater central government scrutiny

The Fire Authority and Fire Service will have a number of challenges which they will need to respond to, as the government pushes its agenda forward. The Authority will need to consider how this will affect them and importantly the effective delivery of services.

The Authority will need to:

- think about how it will stay relevant in the changes taking place across the West Midlands public sector space whilst maintaining and influencing alignment to the WMCA from both a governance and. Service delivery perspective.
- maintain WMFS's identity to avoid being subsumed into the police and crime commissioner and police via a single employer model. Along with a change in this direction comes the possibility in the future that funding for fire becomes subsumed as finance will report into single chief finance officer. Assurances currently have been verbally given that this will not happen but there is still potential in future and this puts the delivery of services at risk.
- work with the PCC in the event a business case is made and demonstrate reform and change. Building on achievements made to date to show greater efficiency and effectiveness, greater accountability, transparency and scrutiny in decisions made by WMFRA to the WMCA and Mayor

There is a relatively small window of opportunity from now to the end of the year to achieve all these elements, to influence the direction and demonstrate the Authority's commitment to reform in a way that will seek to maintain and improve the delivery of its services to the community.

Accountability for fire services in the future will look quite different to what we have today. We still have an opportunity to influence what this may look like and pave the way for the future governance of WMFS to ensure we can deliver against the government agenda without losing the current democratic structure. The Authority cannot sit still.

A Year of Change is ahead and to support the Authority in this a paper will be presented at the AGM on 27 June proposing the Authority approve a 'future governance' working group.

The group will seek to understand and propose the change required to provide greater scrutiny, challenge and accountability through WMFRA, set against the context outlined above and importantly the need to deliver value for money services to the community.

The purpose will be to confirm the Authority's intention to review governance arrangements and demonstrate the Authority's commitment to progressive reform and consideration of models

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mentioned already. Ultimately the Authority will propose what the future governance arrangement for WMFS should look like.

The AGM paper will provide a lot more detail but key to the success of this working group will be a core review group of both members and external stakeholders and a 4-6 month timeline to complete the review and make recommendations to ensure that the intent around reform is demonstrated, timely and therefore relevant.

The Chair thanked the Clerk for a good overview of the latest position and felt there were three potential areas to look at: the PCC, WMCA and Fire/Fire combination which he felt was the best options for quality of service and VFM and did not wish to lose sight of this option.

The Chair stated that the Governance Working Group would enable to Authority to be ready for change and it was unlikely that the Authority will look the same in the future. He felt that it would have to change and restructure, but didn't know what it would look like in the future. The Chair felt that there would be opportunities for democratic accountability for the Authority, further Scrutiny and to champion the fire service so that he doesn't look like a small player.

Consideration would be given to the membership of the Future Governance Working Group at the AGM, and suggested it would comprise members, partner organisations and those who wish to give evidence. The Chair's ambition was to ensure that the fire service doesn't lose its identity in the future. The Authority was already a member of the Combined Authority and stated that they had a major contribution to make. The Fire Service was leading the Troubled Individuals project and providing Telecare in Coventry and Wolverhampton and were hoping to widen out its Safe and Well visits in the future. The Chair stated that the Leaders in the West Midlands appreciated the Fire Authority as a key player.

In answer to a Members question the Clerk confirmed that in Greater Manchester the Mayor has taken over responsibilities for Fire but this is not yet clear in West Midlands

Councillor B Singh stated that the new Board of PCC has a dynamic membership and wondered if this would give an indication of the direction of travel to make a business case to take over the Fire Service.

The Chair confirmed that it was difficult to say. Discussions with PCC had not provided clarity and the PCC stated that he was agnostic wanted to see how the Bill went through parliament and became an Act. However, the Home Secretary had made it clear that this is what she wanted to happen, but when the PCC gave evidence he had stated that he personally couldn't add any value to governance of the Fire Service and would not provide greater efficiency and would not wish to

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be put in a position to make a unilateral bid for the Fire Service and felt that the government should legislate for this to happen.

A final outcome would depend on the political appetite in West Midlands and it was noted that Sion Simon, MP had declared his intention to run for Mayor in West Midlands.

One Member challenged Theresa May's statement and stated that the Fire Authority were open, transparent, and democratic. Having been appointed to the Scrutiny Committee, the Member had seen evidence that the Service delivered on the Plan and wondered what more could be done against a backdrop of cuts. Response times had also been maintained and asked if the Working Group would look at other Authorities to compare if they were receiving praise and found it difficult to understand how the Fire Service could improve.

The Clerk confirmed that the Theresa May statement did recognise the reform that had taken place so far, but the government were moving in the direction of the PCC and devolution and were aiming to achieve further efficiencies through collaboration with other emergency services.

A Member stated that ten years previously the then Chair, and himself had worked well across party politics and the Fire Authority had achieved reform together. Following on from this there had been new leadership and a new Chief Fire Officer and an enormous amount of change and remarkable work had been achieved including the reduction of firefighters through natural wastage and retirement. He felt that these examples of change would bear fruit and the record would stand the Authority in good stead. However, he did feel that the Authority was too big and should be reduced, but was supportive of the Fire Authority and hoped its past record would be taken into consideration.

The Clerk confirmed that the Home Office had taken on Fire as a function and the whole of Fire Service now comes under the control of the Home Office nationally. There was an emerging situation and the Inspectorate is one area that has been confirmed. The Clerk agreed to circulate an overview of Theresa May's Statement.

It was confirmed that the Authority have built relationships, nationally and with the Combined Authority and the Authority are always promoting core services.

The Clerk confirmed the Home Office have been clear that operational roles within the Police and Fire Service will not and cannot be combined and differences would be maintained, Firefighters roles also provide prevention and found this approach is the most valuable.

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The Deputy Chief Fire Officer stated that the Fire Service focus would continue with the prevention agenda and there had been a lot of change, both operationally and financially.

It was noted that one of the government's main areas of focus was on governance and increasing scrutiny, transparency and single accountability. The Policing and Crime Bill provide for this through PCCs.

The Authority would be looking at higher governance whilst focussing on the Service Delivery Model and consideration would be given to other models being used in Manchester and London but there were still a number of unknown factors.

In answer to a question, the Clerk confirmed that a Fire Inspectorate would be established, coming full circle, as the Home Office in comparing with the Police want to establish an Independent Inspectorate for fire. However, the Operational Assessment (OpA), arranged through the LGA and CFOA would continue in the meantime and officers were working with the Home Office to influence the work of the Inspectorate, whilst maintaining the best of OpA.

12/16 Update on Staffing

Engagement with Representative Bodies has taken place in achieving the financial savings required to meet the £10m deficit required to meet the budget cuts.

£2m had been achieved by an increase to Council Tax and Business Rate Distribution

£1m through general budget reductions

£1m internal restructures

£2m through commissioning

£4m was required from staffing

In order to make the savings required, a New Staffing Model was suggested reducing the number of staff from 1332 down to 1168. The shift system, timings and late shifts would not be changed. Optimum Crewing Levels of five firefighters on one appliance and three on another appliance would be required. Leave would be required to be balanced and Voluntary Additional Shifts would be paid at flat rate and the disturbance allowance would increase from 10% to 25%.

Most Voluntary Additional Shifts would be carried out on home stations and travelling expenses for other stations would be capped to 10 miles.

The Staffing Model was put out to a consultative ballot and a neutral approach was taken and a positive response received.

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As at the 1 June 2016, 1236 riders were available representing 98.7% of the workforce. If all staff volunteered, they would only be required to undertake one additional shift per month. There are currently 563 volunteers who will undertake two additional shifts per month and this does not break the Working Time Directive.

Currently the Brigade have a flexible workforce who are working with the guidance and ensuring that the Optimum Crewing Level is managed. Staff are also banking shifts and paying back over the next few months. The outcome is that staff morale is also positive.

Next Steps

The staffing trial will continue until 31 March 2017. During this time rigorous planning, monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken and consideration will be given to the lessons learned during this time. An inclusive and collaborative approach will be used and collaboration will take place with the representative bodies. Station budgets will be devolved during this time and financial monitoring will continue throughout the trial.

By 2017, numbers will have reduced to 1168 and we will have a lean system that will require diligent workforce planning. The Brigade will then start to look at apprenticeships and recruitment. However, if the financial position changes in the future the Service the establishment will revert back to 1322 which will be a more stable way to deliver the Service Delivery Model.

In answer to Members questions:

- Resilience staffing will minimise the use of the disturbance allowance and as volunteers increase travelling expenses will reduce as most volunteers will attend their home stations.
- Travelling expenses would be capped to 10 miles at 45p per mile.
- The review will inform the Service if the staffing model is sustainable.
- Remote working had not been considered and the Service were continuing to use the Service Delivery Model.
- The CFO clarified the Brigade's establishment as 1322 and were temporarily reducing the level until March 2018 when it hoped to return to 1322.
- The disturbance allowance would be reviewed at the end of the year when officers had gained an understanding of the trial. Additional shifts would be paid at plain rate.

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- Leave would need to be balanced throughout the year and the minimum Optimum Crewing Level should provide for increased demand for leave during school holidays etc. The number of volunteers would enable the demands to be managed.
- It was confirmed that the current fleet availability was 98.7% and it was likely that the Brigade would experience some difficulties however, any spikes and deficits would be reported. Over the next three years appliances may reduce, but it was felt that this was an expansive position for individuals, many of whom had second jobs and it was felt that the additional shifts would be popular. There may be some deficits but it was felt that this was the best way to maintain the Service Delivery Model.
- Ultimate financial accountability lay with ACO Taylor, but each individual was also responsible and had personal accountability. The trial would only work if all individuals accepted this responsibility and if there was robust financial management.

Members congratulated Officers and Representative Bodies in reaching an agreement and enabling the staffing trial to commence.

13/16 **Shared Fire Control Engagement**

ACO Taylor explained that Officers had consulted with representatives from the Fire Brigade Union and Unison because agency staff were currently employed in Fire Control.

The consultation period had been compressed and an inclusive approach used to ensure there were not any long periods with no alternative proposals.

In December 2015 an alternative proposal was received from the Representative Bodies to achieve a shared outcome.

The Fire Control Governance Board is made up of Members of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Fire and Rescue Authority and West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority. The Board required the review of Fire Control to include:

- Community Focus
- Excellence in response = 4 mins 38 attendance standard
- Support to Prevention and Protection
- Balance supervision – thinned out and personal accountability
- Increased accountability
- To achieve savings of c £430k (flexibility)

Working with staff and Representative Bodies a New Staffing model was proposed to:

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- Revise the establishment to 52 staff and include Fire Control in the Service Delivery Department. To be regarded as one station and the use the same principles and guidance as the Staffing Trial.
- Reduction 12 – 13 per shift as is currently the case.
- Maintain a 4 watch system and keep the same start times – this system suits the mainly female workforce
- Use the Optimum Crew Levels (OCL)
- Flexible Rostering “Off”
If there were more staff than needed, staff would be able to bank shifts to cover short term absence
- Balanced Leave
- Reduction in middle manager posts
- Achieve savings of c £430k

Next Steps

The next steps in Developing Fire Control for the Future will use a three year rolling programme.

- Recruitment
- Revised Structure
- Address the Cultural Changes
- Home Safety Centre
- Expansion of Role
- Continue Collaboration with Representative Bodies

There are currently a number of agency and recruitment will commence to fill the positions on a permanent basis.

A new management structure will be in place in the next three months and work will commence to balance the watches.

Cultural changes will commence to address the management risks. The three staff who manage the referrals from partners in the Home Safety Centre will be integrated into Fire Control and the role will be expanded to include AFAs, Alarm receiving centres, telecare calls.

Collaboration will continue with stakeholders and Representative Bodies.

Members congratulated Officers on the fantastic work and outcomes achieved.

It was agreed to provide an update at a future Policy Planning Forum on attendance times and initiatives being used. It was also confirmed that a systematic approach of advance calls and pre-alert would be used

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The Brigade's aspiration was to bring down the attendance time to 4.30 minutes. This would require a radical rethink and Fire Control will have a huge part to play in achieving this target.

It was confirmed that 10% of fire control and crews time was used in responding to emergencies.

The Contact Centre managed 0800 calls and referrals. A significant database had been built up and they find the most appropriate time to get referrals booked.

A more reactive and dynamic approach would be used in the future with Fire Control providing a resource management centre managing high risk referrals and immediate response to fires and road traffic accidents.

The working group would include Fire Control staff and partner agencies looking at issues including vulnerable people, referrals and safe and well checks with the aim of achieving less bureaucracy and use the lessons learned from the Falls trial.

The meeting closed at 1220 hours.

<p>Contact Officer: Julie Connor Strategic Hub West Midlands Fire Service 0121 380 6906</p>
