

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

**16 January 2017 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, Aston, Atwal Singh, Barlow, Barrie, Booth,
Brackenridge, Cartwright, Clinton, Craddock, Dad, Davis,
Eustace, Hogarth, Sealey, B Singh, P Singh, T Singh, Spence,
Tranter, Walsh and Young

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 Danbury, M Hamilton-Russell, M Pym, S Timmington,
and S Vincent

Clerk and Monitoring Officer
K Gowreesunker (Clerk)

Apologies: Councillors: Bennett, Mottram, and Skinner
Mr Ager
S Sahota (Monitoring Officer)

Observers: Nil

1/17 Chair and CFO Announcements

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

Fourteen new Fire Control recruits had been successful and a pass out parade would be held on 16 January 2017.

An expansion of the falls response service to the Dudley area had been agreed with Dudley MBC. WMFS would be providing the service out of hours, including evenings, weekends, and bank holidays.

Thanks were extended from the Chief Fire Officer and Members to the specialist advisors, both locally and nationally, who had been mobilised to the east coast due to the risk of severe flooding.

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Former WMFS employee, Rose Jones, who had worked within Fire Control and subsequently for the Fire Brigades Union, had sadly passed away, with her funeral due to take place on 17 January 2017. The Chief Fire Officer noted that he would pass on condolences on behalf of the Fire Authority.

2/17 Future Governance Working Group

Cllr Edwards delivered a presentation and update on the work of the Future Governance Working Group (FGWG):

The FGWG comprised representatives of a wide variety of organisations, including but not limited to representatives from the Home Office, West Midlands Combined Authority, West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, and the health sector.

The Fire Authority commissioned the FGWG in June 2016, and since then it had met five times over a six month period to consider:

- Collaboration, now and future
- Collaboration, wider than just emergency blue light services
- Agreement of community outcomes
- Four governance options (assessing achievability of community outcomes):
 - Reformed Fire Authority
 - Combination of Fire Authorities
 - West Midlands Combined Authority / Mayor
 - Police and Crime CommissionerNote: variations of options were also considered.

Outcomes and criteria considered included public safety, better collaboration, scrutiny and accountability, savings, costs, and risks.

Initial outcomes included:

- It was clear that collaboration was wider than just emergency blue light services
- Combination will achieve majority of outcomes but little political appetite
- A single change in governance would be smoother. A two stage governance change could potentially result in less effective delivery of outcomes to enable effective change
- The option regarding the West Midlands Combined Authority / Mayor could provide a better approach to achieving delivery of wider West Midlands priorities and services of WMFS

The draft conclusions of the FGWG included:

- The Authority need to be ahead of change

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- A focus of further collaboration across the region should continue
- Consideration should be given to how WMFS' governance structure should change to enhance services
- Any two stage change could increase costs, risks and reduce benefits
- Opportunities to collaborate with the Ambulance Service are significant
- A Mayor will create opportunity in improving public services, ensuring full engagement, to enable best opportunity for delivery of outcomes for future

In terms of next steps, it was noted that the Fire Authority would need to begin mapping direction for the future. Early reform and engagement can support mitigation of risks considered by the FGWG.

The outcomes of the FGWG would be presented in a report at the Fire Authority meeting scheduled on 20 February.

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

- The IRMP consultation included questions regarding the future governance model of WMFS. This was the first tentative step in the process of gaining insight into public perception.
- In the event of the PCC undertaking a business case, it is the PCC that would need to consult with the public.
- In the event of a business case, the PCC would orchestrate the consultation; the Fire Authority would be a consultee.
- With regard to whether a PCC should consult with the public about proposals before proceeding with any business case, this will not be a requirement of the Policing and Crime Bill, or of the Government.
- Any business case would need to stack up and demonstrate improvements including in the areas of efficiency and effectiveness.
- The Government has recognised that the PCC model may not be the best option in devolved areas. However, following remarks made by the Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, it does seem that there is an expectation for business cases to be developed and submitted by PCCs.

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3/17 IRMP Consultation 2016/17

Mark Hamilton-Russell, Strategic Enabler Corporate Communications, delivered a presentation on the consultation of the integrated risk management plan (IRMP):

The consultation involved engaging with members of our communities, partners and business between December 2016 and 10th January 2017 around our Service Delivery Model, priorities, funding and governance.

The Service received 5757 responses to the consultation, potentially more once analysis of all paper copies has been completed. The number of responses was higher than the previous IRMP consultation undertaken by the Service, and significantly higher than consultation exercises undertaken by other public sector organisations. The response rate and level of engagement demonstrated the reputation of the WMFS brand and the Service's reach into our communities.

A brief overview of the initial results were provided as follows:

- We know that getting to people, homes and businesses in 5 minutes means they are more likely to survive serious incidents. Do you agree we should continue to protect our 5-minute target?
 - Yes: 96%
 - No: 2%
 - Don't know: 2%

- Our plans include a 1.99% increase in council tax which amounts to £1.12 to an average band 'D' property per year. Would you support consideration of a further increase of up to £5 per year in order to protect our 5-minute target?
 - Yes: 82%
 - No: 10%
 - Don't know: 8%

- Do you agree that our Prevention, Protection and Response work will make the communities and businesses of the West Midlands Safer, Stronger and Healthier?
 - Yes: 91%
 - No: 2%
 - Don't know: 7%

- What do you think are the most important things to consider when it comes to how we are governed?

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- In order of importance:
 - Safety (prevention, protection, response)
 - Value for money
 - Working with others
 - More transparency
 - More accountability
 - More scrutiny
- Which of these options would best support the delivery with our partners of our prevention, protection and response services to you?
 - In order of preference:
 - Reformed Fire Authority
 - Combination
 - WMCA Mayor
 - PCC
- Considering we already get a Government grant and money from Council Tax, should we continue to look at alternative ways of bringing in money?
 - Yes: 81%
 - No: 12%
 - Don't know: 7%
- Do you think your fire service's funding should be linked to the business rates collected by the West Midlands' seven councils, or come from a completely new Government grant which has no link to local business rate collections?
 - Business rates: 36%
 - Government grant: 41%
 - Don't know: 23%

A brief overview of the demographics of the respondents was provided:

- Gender:
 - 51% male
 - 46% female
- Age:
 - 16-24: 8%
 - 25-44: 36%
 - 45-64: 36%
 - 65+: 17%
 - Did not disclose: 3%
- Ethnicity:

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- White British/Irish, White & Black (mixed race), White Asian: 80%
- Asian, Asian British, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi: 10%
- Black British Caribbean: 6.5%
- Other: 3.5%

- Religion:
 - Christian: 44%
 - None: 34%
 - Did not disclose: 9.5%
 - Muslim: 4.1%
 - Sikh: 3.7%
 - Other: 2.1%
 - Hindu: 1.5%

- 441 Community Members responded to the consultation (54% female, 46% male), equating to 8% of all respondents

Further analysis would be undertaken, and the responses and comments would be used to assist in the shaping of The Plan.

The Chief Fire Officer thanked all Members and Officers for their efforts and contributions in making the consultation exercise a success.

The meeting closed at 12:08 hours.

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