

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

10th September, 2007 at 10.00 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: **Members of the Authority**

Councillors Alden, Ali Khan, Birbeck, Bowen,
S Davis, Douglas-Maul, Foster, Gazey, Hinton,
Howard, Hussain, Jackson, Mulhall, Ryder,
Singh, Spence, Stevenson, Tagger, Turner,
Ward, Wild and Wilkes;
Messrs Bagley, Denny and Topliss.

Officers: **West Midlands Fire Service**

Chief Fire Officer – F Sheehan;
Assistant Chief Officers – Alan Brandon, John Brown
and Martin Clark;
Bob Deeks and Mike Griffiths.

Clerk to the Authority

N Sharma, S Phelps, S Hancock and G Wythes.

Treasurer to the Authority

L Bateman.

Apologies: Councillors G Davies and Eustace.

16/07 **Induction on Authority Matters**

The Clerk gave a short outline of the governance arrangements for the Authority for the benefit of new members, and referred to the possible impact of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, when enacted, for the Authority in terms of increased scrutiny by constituent District Councils, as well as amendment of the ethical framework.

Members were also advised of the interim results of a recent survey into member training needs.

Reference was made to the possibility of setting up an Audit Committee for the Authority. The Chairman indicated that it was proposed to report to the next meeting of the Authority on this matter.

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The Monitoring Officer reported that the Standards Committee, at its meeting on 7th September, 2007, had considered proposals for a revised Code of Conduct which it was commending to the Authority for adoption. Significant changes in the revised Code of Conduct were outlined.

The Monitoring Officer also informed Members of the anticipated legislative changes which would result in additional responsibility for the Standards Committee and the Authority.

The Chair of the Standards Committee addressed Members on the importance of the ethical framework, and encouraged them to return the training questionnaire so that training needs on the revised Code of Conduct could be assessed. Many Members indicated that they had already received training on the Code of Conduct in their host authorities.

There was a discussion amongst Members about the practical difficulties they could potentially face in complying with the Code of Conduct and how it varied from the regime imposed on national politicians.

Members watched the Standards Board for England DVD entitled 'The Code Uncovered' which provided guidance on the main changes to the Member Code of Conduct.

17/07 **Financial Management Update**

The Treasurer provided an overview of the current financial standing of the Authority including information on revenue and capital budgets; efficiency targets; performance on the Use of Resources element of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment; and an outline of current issues for the Authority including grant funding, the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review, the new efficiency regime, the future funding of New Dimension assets, the move to Regional Fire Control and FireLink, and current procurement issues.

(Meeting ended at 11.59 am)

<p><i>Contact Officer: Georgina Wythes Democratic Services Unit Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 0121 569 3791</i></p>
