

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

31st January, 2005 at 9.30 a.m.
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: **Members of the Authority**

Councillors Afzal, Birbeck, Bowen, Davis, Eustace, Foster, Haque, Hinton, Hogarth, Howard, Idrees, Jackson, Kazi, Lawrence, Matchet, Perry, Pitt, Rogers, Ross, Ryder, Singh, Underhill, Wallace and Ward.

Officers: **West Midlands Fire Service**

Chief Fire Officer – F Sheehan.
Deputy Chief Fire Officer – V Randeniya.
Assistant Chief Officers – A Brandon, J Brown, R Hulland and D Smethurst.
G Brice, M Griffiths and A Rotchell.

Clerk to the Authority

G Wythes and S Hopcroft.

Treasurer to the Authority

L Bateman.

Observer: Mr C Topliss.

Apology: Nigel Summers

1/05 **British National Party**

Members discussed the issue of compatibility of membership of the British National Party with employment in the Fire Service. A number of other public sector organisations had determined policies on this matter, and there was ongoing debate at a national level.

After a considerable debate, members indicated that they needed more information to reach a view on this matter. In the meantime they felt that the Authority's disciplinary processes were sufficiently robust to deal with any incidents of racist behaviour.

Members asked the Chief Fire Officer to keep abreast of the debate at national level, and to report back in due course to the Policy Planning Forum.

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2/05

Budget 2005/2006

Further to Note 28/04, the Treasurer gave an update on the projected 2005/2006 budget.

At a budget consultation meeting in December 2004, district council Leaders had made a plea to keep the increase in the precept below 4.9% if possible, but would not want there to be any deleterious effect on front line services.

The Treasurer was now able to report that in the light of more certainty on projected income and anticipated savings, it would be possible to keep the increase in the precept to 4.8% in 2005/06. At this rate of precept front line services could be maintained, but a number of proposed developments of service could not proceed. The Treasurer also indicated that capital developments would be limited. It was anticipated that the financial situation in 2006/07 would also be difficult.

29/04

Integrated Risk Management Plan Action Plan 2005/06

Members received an update on the background to the Integrated Risk Management Plan Action Plan and the current consultation exercise around the proposals to reduce the number of fire engines operating at night from a number of stations. Under the proposals, every station would retain at least one engine in service at night.

It was the professional advice of the officers that, based on careful analysis of the level of activity at night over a five year period and of the risk factors involved, the proposals set out in the Action Plan 2005/06 were the way forward for a modernised service. The shift in resources would enable fire prevention work to be enhanced.

Members discussed the progress of the consultation and their own experience of the process so far.

A further report would be brought to the Forum on 28th February, 2005 on the outcome of the consultation and the officers' responses to any questions and concerns raised by stakeholders and members of the public.

(Meeting ended at 11.44 a.m.)

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