

<p>Notes of the Policy Planning Forum</p>
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8th September 2008, at 9.45 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

Present: **Members of the Authority**
Councillors Alden, Ali Khan, Chambers, Clinton,
Delaney, Gazey, Howard, Idrees, Jones, O'Neill,
Robinson, Ryder, S Davis, Singh, Skinner B.Sc.,
M.A.; Spence, Stevenson, Sutton, Tagger,
Turner, Tweddle and Ward.
Messrs Bagley and Topliss.

Officers: **West Midlands Fire Service**
Chief Fire Officer – F Sheehan;
Assistant Chief Officers – Alan Brandon, John Brown,
Martin Clarke and Doug Tweddle.
Head of Finance and Procurement - Mike Griffiths.
Head of Human Resources – David Johnson
Equality and Diversity Manager - Babs Hays.

Clerk to the Authority
S Phelps, L Bateman, N Sharma, G Wythes and
S Hancock.

Apologies: Councillors Eustace and Hinton.

18/08 **Chief Fire Officer's Introduction**

The Chief Fire Officer welcomed Members to the Authority's first meeting at the new headquarters.

The Brigade was making progress in a number of key areas of work. In particular, there were a number of community initiatives currently underway.

The Brigade had taken place in the World Fire Fighter Games, hosted by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service between 24th August and 3rd September 2008. Many West Midlands fire fighters had gained medals.

Policy Planning Forum – 8th September 2008

Consultation was ongoing regarding the future of Sedgley Fire Station. Open days and meetings had been well attended by fire fighters and their families and officers had responded to a number of questions from local MPs on the proposals.

19/08 Circulation of Authority Papers

The Clerk gave a demonstration of the Authority's Committee Management Information System (CMIS). Members had the option of receiving email and/or text alerts to inform them when papers were available to download from CMIS with view to reducing the number of paper copies produced. Any Members wishing to trial this arrangement were asked to inform the Clerk.

20/08 Equality and Diversity Strategy

Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018

The Head of Human Resources informed Members that a National Equality and Diversity Strategy had been launched in May 2008. The strategy was made up of five priority areas – leadership and promoting inclusion; accountability; effective service delivery and community engagement; employment and training; and evaluation and sharing. The strategy would look at both the internal and external operations of an organisation.

Single Equalities Bill

Members were informed that a new Equalities Bill was to be introduced in the next parliamentary session, which aimed to bring together the current six strands of equality. Royal Assent was expected in Spring/Summer 2009.

Equality Framework for Local Government

Members were informed that consultation had concluded recently on an Equality Framework for local Government. The framework set out five areas where authorities would be measured – knowing the community; leadership and partnership; community engagement; responsive services and customer care; and modern diverse workforce. Authorities would be scored as either 'Emerging', 'Achieving' or 'Excellent'. The Standard would be launched in January 2009 and Authorities were expected to commence work from April 2009.

21/08 **Environmental Strategy**

Members were updated on progress in relation to the Authority's Environmental Strategy, launched in March 2008.

A network of environmental champions had been identified across the organisation to drive forward the strategy and a number of 'quick win' initiatives had been implemented, including a car share scheme, a corporate travel pass scheme and a HQ cycle pool whereby staff would be able to loan a bicycle. Many other initiatives were being considered, not all of which were 'quick wins' and some would require investment.

The new headquarters had achieved an 'Excellent' BREEAM rating from the Carbon Trust as a result of a number of environmentally friendly measures used in its development, including energy saving lighting and rainwater harvesting.

(Meeting ended at 11.45 am)

<p><i>Contact Officer: Stephnie Hancock Democratic Services Unit Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 0121 569 3189</i></p>
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