

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

29th March, 2010 at 10.00 am
at Bickenhill Fire Station, NEC, Solihull

Present: **Members of the Authority**

Councillors Ali Khan, Chambers, Clinton, S Davis, Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Gazey, Idrees, Jones, Mulhall, O'Neill, M Robinson, S Davis, Singh, Skinner, Spence, Stevenson, Turner and Ward.
Mr Ager, Mr Denny and Mr Topliss.

Officers: **West Midlands Fire Service**

Chief Fire Officer – V Randeniya.
Deputy Chief Fire Officer M Clark
Assistant Chief Fire Officers – J Brown and T Prosser (Acting).
Assistant Chief Officers - A Brandon, M Griffiths and D Johnson.
Corporate Policy Manager - M Hamilton-Russell.

Clerk to the Authority

S Phelps and S Hancock.

Treasurer to the Authority

S Kellas.

Apologies: Councillors G Davies, Hinton, Ryder and Tagger.

8/10

Announcements

The Chairman and Chief Fire Officer thanked Members for their attendance and made the following announcements:-

- Assistant Chief Fire Officer John Brown would be retiring in September, 2010, after 41 years of service.
- Some Members had received communication from the Fire Brigades' Union in relation to the roll out of new chairs on fire stations. The Chairman had visited several stations and was satisfied that replacement of furniture not fit for purpose was necessary.

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- The annual schools' quiz would take place on 13th July 2010 at West Midlands Fire Service Academy, Smethwick (previously known as Training Centre).
- 'The Plan', which had replaced the Corporate Strategy, would be formally published on 1st April, 2010.
- The Chief Fire Officer would be climbing Mount Snowden on 21st April, 2010 in aid of Help for Heroes and the Firefighters' Charity. He would be accompanied by a support team, which included officers from the Young Firefighters' Association.
- Jim Cunningham MP, for Coventry South, had recently presented a Bill under the Ten Minute Rule on the installation of sprinklers.
- It was proposed to hold the Policy Planning Forum scheduled for 7th June, 2010 at Fallings Park Station, in Wolverhampton.

9/10

Comparative Budget Position

The Director of Finance and Procurement gave an update on the budget position following the Authority's decision on the level of precept for 2010/2011.

The difference between the planned precept increase of 2.5% and the approved increase of 1.99% equated to £200k. With the exception of Tyne and Wear, West Midlands Fire Service had set the lowest precept nationally, the average being 2.5%.

Since 2005/2006 the Authority had made efficiency savings of £7.7million as a result of some major decisions, which had included changes to duty systems and shift patterns. Savings for 2009/2010 were estimated to be around £1.5million. Targeted efficiency savings for 2010/2011 amounted to £1million, which was expected to be found from support services. The Executive Committee had recently approved changes to the structure of the Corporate Board, which would contribute to the efficiencies.

A number of national issues were also expected to impact on expenditure in 2010/2011, as well as an anticipated reduction in government funding.

Further updates would be brought to future meetings.

10/10 **Planning for 2011/2014**

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reminded members of the Authority's achievements over the past 20 years and informed members of the proposed approach to corporate planning for 2011/2014:-

The Brigade's achievements included:-

- leading the way in the implementation of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1998, which had saved many hundreds of lives;
- an increased onus on community fire safety work from 1990, which was innovative at that time and helped to shaped the future approach to fire prevention;
- an innovative approach to integrated risk management in 2004, which included the changes to duty systems and shift patterns and the matching of demand to resources in terms of responding to fires;
- the development of Safeside in 2008, which was nationally acclaimed;
- an award winning technical rescue team as a result of investment in the best equipment;
- the recent Aspire awards ceremony which celebrated the successes of many of the Authority's employees.

The Audit Commission's 'Rising to the Challenge' document (2009) identified a number of significant areas for consideration that would influence planning and decision making. The Employee Opinion Survey had provided some useful information on employee views on change management and communication, which would be used to shape future planning. The Government's Operational Efficiency Programme and Total Place initiative would also have an impact on future planning.

11/10 **Technical Rescue Station Visit**

Members were shown around the Technical Rescue Station and the New Dimension assets that the Authority was set to acquire from the Department for Communities and Local Government on 1st April 2010.

(Meeting ended at 12.50 p.m.)

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