

<p>Notes of the Policy Planning Forum</p>
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23rd October, 2006 at 9.30 a.m.
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: **Members of the Authority**

Councillors Alden, Birbeck, Bowen, S Davis,
Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Foster, Gazey, Hinton,
Hogarth, Howard, Hussain, Idrees, Pitt, Singh,
Tagger and Ward.
Mr Topliss.

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 M Clark and D Twedde;
B Hayes and A Rotchell.

Clerk to the Authority

S Phelps and G Wythes.

Treasurer to the Authority

L Bateman, P Farrow, T Groom and R Powell.

Apologies: Councillors Jackson, Jones, Mulhall, Rogers, Ryder
and Spence.

20/06 **Introductions and Announcements**

The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that the revised shift patterns and duty systems were due to be implemented with effect from 1st November, 2006.

He also reported that discussions were continuing at National Joint Council with regard to the phasing out of Long Service Increments but there was no agreement to date. Local negotiations were in hand with the Fire Brigades Union with regard to this matter.

A further external performance assessment on operational assurance

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was due to start on 20th November, 2006.

He reminded Members of the forthcoming Parliamentary reception to be held on 15th November, 2006.

21/06 Alternative Risk Transfer

Further to Minute No 69/06 of the Authority [25th September, 2006], Robin Powell, Sandwell Council's Corporate Risk Manager, outlined proposals currently being explored by a consortium of Fire and Rescue Authorities [FRAs] to develop an alternative risk transfer [ART] vehicle to reduce the cost of insurance for FRAs. The preferred model for the ART was a mutual insurance company based in the United Kingdom.

Further work was being carried out into the detail of the proposals, and a further report would be presented in due course.

Members asked a number of questions and made a number of observations, all of which would be taken into account in the further development of the proposals.

22/06 Race Equality Scheme

Members were updated on progress with Equality and Diversity matters including: work taking place to implement the approved Race Equality Scheme; development of a Disability Equality Scheme; promotion of core values within the Brigade; current activity in the Equality and Diversity Team; and plans for future action, for example, development of a Gender Equality Scheme, a cultural audit, moving to Level 3 of the Equality Standard, introduction of peer support officers, ensuring equality in firefighter training, and generally improving communication.

Members indicated that more time was needed to debate and discuss developments in this area.

23/06 Internal Audit Issues

The Treasurer and Internal Auditor reminded Members that the terms of reference of the Executive Committee had been amended at the Annual Meeting in June 2006 to clarify its functions in relation to audit issues. A summary of audit work undertaken to 30th September, 2006 was presented. It was proposed for the future to submit quarterly

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reports along these lines to the Policy Planning Forum and Executive Committee identifying any key issues that required attention.

(Meeting ended at 11.55 a.m.)

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