

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

9 January, 2012 at 9.30 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: **Members of the Authority**

Councillors Alden, Ali Khan, Andrew, Clinton, Davies, Davis, Docker, Douglas-Maul, Edwards, Eustace, Finnegan, Foster, Griffiths, Hogarth, Idrees, Lines, O'Neill, Ryder, Sandy, Singh, Spence, Stevenson, Tranter and Turner.
Messrs Ager, Denny and Topliss.

Officers: **West Midlands Fire Service**

Chief Fire Officer – V Randeniya.
A Brandon, K Brown, S Chidwick, T Embrey, M Griffiths, P Hales, D Johnson, P Loach, P Mika, J Robb, D Walton.

Clerk and Monitoring Officer

N Sharma and G Wythes.

Treasurer

S Kellas.

Apologies: Councillors Chambers and Walsh.

1/12 **Chief Fire Officer and Chair's Announcements**

The Chair reported that his approaches to district councils with regard to the precept had received a mixed response. He had undertaken to supply district councils with additional information on measures already taken by the Authority in response to the financial situation, and a copy of this information pack would be supplied to members. The Authority at its February meeting would set the budget for 2012/13 and members would receive professional advice on the legal position, the operational position and the financial perspective. Authority members were under a legal and fiduciary duty to set a balanced budget and were in the best position to make an informed decision on this matter.

The Chief Fire Officer referred to a house fire in Lancashire which had resulted in four deaths. A correctly-fitted smoke detector had been moved which prevented its effective operation.

He also announced that Watch Commander Rudy Parkes had been awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours List 2012. Rudy had served with the West Midlands Fire Service for 28 years and was also a member of the International Search and Rescue Team (ISAR).

The Chief Fire Officer informed members that the West Midlands Fire Service Academy had secured a fire safety training contract with the McClaren Formula One Racing Team.

Further to Note 28/11 (Health and Safety – Corporate Responsibility), the Chief Fire Officer reported that an external health and safety consultant had now worked with staff at two fire stations validating the Authority's health and safety policies and had determined that firefighters were fully embracing health and safety policies.

Further to Authority Minute No 69/10, the Chief Fire Officer indicated that revised charges to other fire and rescue services for assistance under Section 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 had been agreed and the Authority would not now be at such a disadvantage when responding to incidents outside the West Midlands.

2/12 National Framework Document – Consultation Response

Members received a presentation on the draft Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England which had been issued for consultation by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The draft framework set out a number of priorities for fire and rescue authorities:

- To identify and assess the full range of risks, provide prevention and protection activities, and respond to incidents appropriately;
 - To work in partnership with communities and partners locally and nationally to deliver their service; and
 - To be accountable to communities for the service they provide;
- and set out Government's expectations and requirements for fire and rescue services in respect of those priorities.

Members discussed the document and its implications for the Service. Members' comments would be collated into a draft response which would be submitted to the Authority for approval on 13 February 2012.

3/12 Corporate Risk Management

The Authority's corporate risk management process was outlined for members' information. The process included risk assessments, inspections, home fire safety checks, the integrated risk management

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plan, business continuity planning, programme management, equality impact assessments and the corporate risk register. All these elements were well embedded in the Service. The Audit and Performance Management Committee regularly monitored risk management, as did internal and external audit.

4/12 Income Generation Opportunity

Members were reminded of the financial situation facing the Authority and that one of the four strategic approaches to dealing with the anticipated shortfall in resources was to seek income generation opportunities.

The Localism Act 2011 gave fire and rescue authorities a general power of competence which included the possibility of commercial activity. Proposals were being drawn up to pursue the formation of a trading company which could generate resources from commercial activity to plough back into the front line service. A further report in this matter would be submitted to the Executive Committee on 23 January 2012.

(Meeting ended at 12.20 pm)

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