

<p>Notes of the Policy Planning Forum</p>
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30th January 2006 at 9.30 a.m.
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: **Members of the Authority**

Councillors Birbeck, Bowen, S Davis, Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Foster, Jones, Hinton, Hogarth, Howard, Hussain, Idrees, Jackson, Matchet, Mulhall, Pitt, Rogers, Ross, Ryder, Singh, Stevenson, Tagger, Underhill 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 and M Park;
M Griffiths and A Rotchell.

Clerk to the Authority

N Summers, S Hancock and G Wythes.

Treasurer to the Authority

L Bateman.

1/06 **Councillor Joan Stevenson**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Joan Stevenson to the Authority, who had recently been appointed to represent Wolverhampton MBC to replace Councillor Jevon.

2/06 **Councillor Laura Ross**

Members of the Forum welcomed Councillor Laura Ross back to her first meeting following the birth of her daughter, Eve.

3/06 **Duty Systems and Shift Patterns**

ACO Hulland reported that the review of duty systems and shift patterns was now underway and a report would be submitted to the Authority meeting on 13th February 2006 on the outcome of the review. Relationships with the Fire Brigades' Union appeared to be more positive at present.

4/06 **New Fire Service Headquarters**

Members received a detailed presentation on the current proposals for a new Fire Service Headquarters. Consultants CBRE had now identified four sites, including both existing buildings and new build.

The Treasurer outlined the financial implications of the proposals.

A detailed report and recommendations on the preferred site would be presented to the Executive Committee following this meeting.

5/06 **Firefighters' Pension Scheme**

Members were informed that further industrial action was threatened in response to the Government's proposals to changes to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme and of the likely financial implications.

The Fire Brigades' Union Recall Conference was scheduled for 16th February 2006, after which further information would be known.

A letter was to be sent to the Minister for Local Government requesting that a solution to the issue be found as soon as possible.

6/06 **Budget 2006/2007**

Further to Note 31/05 (19th December 2005) the Treasurer gave an update on the projected budget for 2006/2007.

The final figure for the Revenue Support Grant had not yet been received, however projections had been made based on the provisional figure and an assumed increase in the pension fund. In addition, the outcome of the review of duty systems and shift patterns was presently an unknown impact on the budget.

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An allowance had been made within the figures for prudential borrowing to commence in relation to the new headquarters project. It was difficult to predict cash flow at present and the realisation of the capital receipt from the sale of the existing headquarters site would be crucial.

At the District Leaders meeting held on 16th December 2005 the Authority had been requested to consider a precept increase lower than the proposed 4.9%. The Treasurer was now able to report that it would be possible to keep the increase in the precept to 4.8%.

(Meeting ended at 11.55 a.m.)

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