

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE  
PARTNERSHIP WORKING, FUNDING  
AND/OR GOODS, WORKS OR SERVICES  
PROVIDED FREELY FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES**

**1. POLICY**

It is the policy of this Brigade to take full advantage of partnership working, funding and/or goods, works or services provided freely from external sources whether such opportunities arise from partnerships, bids, grants or sponsorship. Such agreements may be in the form of goods, works, services, funds, projects or activities which will be used to support one or more of the Corporate Aims of the Brigade. Alternatively partnerships may not attract any specific income but such arrangements must be consistent with one or more of the Corporate Aims. Throughout this Order, reference to partnership and/or external funding shall mean any of the possibilities in the title of the Order.

**2. STRATEGY**

The Brigade has in place the procedures, detailed below, that must be followed by officers considering taking advantage of any of the opportunities set out in the policy above. Adherence to the procedures will ensure probity and accountability whilst maximising the advantages arising from such opportunities in a timely manner.

**3. PROCEDURES**

Responsible Officers

The officer responsible for advising, assisting, developing and recording the opportunities set out in the policy above is the External Partnerships Officer (Corporate Planning), who will be responsible for: -

- provision of advice, guidance and support in respect of external funding and partnership arrangements.
- maintenance of a central database of external funding/or and partnership arrangements

The officer responsible for the overall management of the opportunities set out in the policy above is the Director (Performance and Planning).

The database maintained by the External Partnerships Officer, will provide a focal point for partnership and funding activities. Reference to the database will ensure a coordinated approach to seeking partnerships and or funding.

The External Partnerships Officer must be advised by email of any partnership or funding opportunity as soon as there is any intent by an external agency to provide any funding or to enter into any agreement. Once any firm commitment to partnership and/or funding has been established then the External Partnerships Officer should be updated accordingly by email. The External Partnerships Officer may offer any initial advice or thoughts on such possibilities and will add the information received to the database.

The data to be provided by Brigade officers will include: -

- the name of the partner or funding provider,
- the nature of the partnership or funding,

- the value to the Brigade in financial terms,
- the benefits to the Brigade,
- the benefits to the partner and/or external funder,
- the period covered by the partnership or funding,
- the costs to the Brigade (if any),
- the performance indicators to be used in measuring the successes of any such partnership or funding and any details of third party reporting.
- the level of any resources required, direct costs or opportunity costs, e.g. person days.
- the risks that might be attached to the partnership/external funding.
- the level of impact on existing workloads.
- the signature of any agreements.
- the way in which any work has been prioritised in local action plans.
- the objectives of the partnership and/or funding.
- the review process of the success or otherwise of the partnership and/or funding.
- the names of key contacts.

#### 4. PROCESS DEPENDENT ON THE LEVEL OF FUNDING

In order to process funding opportunities in a timely manner the following financial levels must be followed: -

Funding up to £2K	-	Approval by another Station Commander
Funding between £2K and £10K	-	Approval by SDO (Performance and Planning) <sup>†</sup>
Funding between £10K and £20K	-	Approval by Director (Performance and Planning) *
Funding above £20K	-	Approval by Corporate Board and Executive Committee

<sup>†</sup> In this officer's absence approval must be sought by Director (Performance and Planning)

\* In this officer's absence approval must be sought by any other Director

The values above relate to the total value of the funding, even if this is spread over a number of years.

If any direct funding is to be provided, then officers must liaise immediately with the Finance Officer to ensure proper accounting procedures and rules of probity are followed at all times. The Finance Officer should also be consulted about the inclusion of any vehicles or equipment provided in terms of their inclusion in fleet lists and/or asset registers; as well as the disposal of such equipment. Depending on the scale of the partnership and/or funding, officers may wish to consider using PRINCE2 methodology to manage any such project. The level of PRINCE2 application should be proportionate to the timescale of the partnership and/or the level of funding involved.

#### 5. PRACTICAL AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are many organisations who are seeking to raise brand awareness or enhance their profile through partnership/funding and association with organisations such as the West Midlands Fire Service. Such organisations may operate on a local, national or international

level; links with local communities may be part of their business plans. It is essential that due care is taken to ensure that public affiliation between a partner/funder and the Brigade does not cause embarrassment to the Brigade. Partnership/funding should not be considered where there is a risk of compromising the integrity or propriety of the Brigade e.g. by accepting offers from sources which would be in conflict with statutory obligations or where the provider seeks endorsement of a product or service to gain preferential treatment in supplying or contracting goods or services to the Brigade or to influence the direction of a particular policy or Fire Service operation.

Officers must consider the following guidance before proposing an organisation as a potential partner or source of external funding.

- Potentially sensitive association with inappropriate sponsors.
- Projects which could distract efforts from tackling agreed priorities, the Vision or Mission Statement, the Corporate Aims or Business Plan objectives.
- Projects of dubious or limited benefit in Fire Service terms.
- Offers of goods, loans or funds or partnership with inappropriate conditions attached.
- Offers of goods, loans or funding or partnership with additional or ongoing revenue costs attached.
- Offers of equipment which is incompatible with existing Service equipment.
- Offers of equipment which may attract additional costs e.g. insurance costs, maintenance costs.
- The risk of becoming unduly dependent on a facility liable to be withdrawn.
- Consideration must be given to Value Added Tax implications. The Finance Office will advise and arrange centrally for proper accounting arrangements with Customs and Excise.

Some opportunities as set out in Section 1, Policy, may have political considerations. Funding and partnerships are generally welcomed by all political parties. Funding in excess of £20k will be drawn to the attention of Authority Members via the Executive Committee reports. However, it may be advantageous to draw to the attention of Elected Members, and in some cases Members of Parliament, funding opportunities below £20K and partnerships in general. Officers should advise the Director (Performance and Planning) via E-mail of any such proposed involvement. Major launches of all related events should be included in the Brigade's electronic diary and should be notified to the Brigade's Media Relations Officer at the earliest opportunity to promote the partnership concerned.

Internal Departments need to be consulted according to the purpose of the partnership/sponsorship to ensure all issues are identified and dealt with before any agreement is signed. Examples are given in Appendix 1 to this Order of possible scenarios.

## **6. PROBITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

External funds have the potential to greatly extend the Brigade's service to the public. Not only can external finance be used for projects that could not otherwise be undertaken but there is the additional benefit of involving a wider sector of the community in the work of the Brigade. However, the process is potentially complicated and external funding should only be sought and accepted under clear and carefully defined conditions. Everyone involved must have a full understanding of what is being offered and what each party to any agreement will receive. It should not be assumed that the other party is always aware of the possible pitfalls.

Businesses will have a legitimate commercial interest in offering resources to the Brigade but there should also be a well intentioned reason for offering assistance. The Brigade will always give priority to the needs of the Service rather than those of the sponsor or donor. It is also vital to ensure that such agreements provide real additional resources, i.e. after taking into account any increased costs incurred by the Brigade in developing agreements and in subsequent maintenance and other liabilities. Intangible benefits obtained through increased public support and co-operation are a bonus.

Potential partners and/or funding providers must not be put under undue pressure or made to feel obliged to support the Brigade. All such contributions must be voluntary. Appropriate written agreements must be prepared and exchanged as part of, and prior to, accepting any of the opportunities referred to in the Policy Section of this Order.

## **7. CONSULTATION PROCESS**

From time to time, opportunities may arise which, if implemented, may impact upon employees. Where considered appropriate consultation will take place with the Representative Bodies to ensure full consideration is given to the potential impact of any proposal. All such consultation must be undertaken by the officer instigating the partnership working or funding from external sources asking the Director of Human Resources to be the liaison officer with the Representative Bodies.

## **8. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

During the course of work involving sponsorships, personnel may be exposed to offers of donations, gifts or hospitality. Personnel must ensure that the procedures detailed in Standing Order No. 2/15, Acceptance of Donations, Gifts and Hospitality, are strictly adhered to at all times.

## **9. OTHER RELEVANT POINTS OF REFERENCE WITHIN STANDING ORDERS**

Additional information in support of this Standing Order may be found in other Standing Orders. Those Orders should also be adhered to and referred to in the context of and in conjunction with this Order.

The particular Standing Orders are:

Standing Order No. 1/8 - Tenders and Quotations Procedure

Standing Order No. 1/22 - Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy

Standing Order No. 2/15 - Acceptance of Donations, Gifts and Hospitality

See also the Authority's Financial Regulations, Section 5

### **GUIDANCE NOTES FOR PERSONNEL REGARDING AREAS TO CONSIDER WHEN INVESTIGATING PARTNERSHIPS, BIDS, GRANTS OR SPONSORSHIP**

With the increased involvement of personnel in partnership activities, it was felt that it would be helpful to issue some guidance as to some of the issues they must think about when considering such partnerships.

The following is meant to be an aide memoire and is by no means exclusive. Each project tends to be different and therefore requires possibly a different approach and input and other things may need to be considered in addition to those listed below.

1. Approval from Corporate Board. Report template available from Word Processing Unit at Headquarters, extension 6911.
2. Approval from the Authority/Committee. Report template available from Word Processing Unit at Headquarters, extension 6911.
3. Brigade's building stock – contact Estates, extension 6520.
4. Insurance implications – contact Secretariat, extension 6891.
5. Residential tenancy implications – contact Secretariat, extension 6891.
6. If vehicles involved - contact Transport Engineering Workshops, contact 0121 356 2929.
7. Legal implications (contracts, etc.) - contact Secretariat, extension 6891.
8. Leases with third parties – contact Secretariat, extension 6891.
9. Staffing implications – contact Personnel Department, extension 6203.
10. ICT issues – contact ICT, extension 6560.
11. Asset Register or fleet list implications – contact Finance 6919.
12. Inventory implications – contact Secretariat, extension 6891.
13. Prevention, Protection, Intervention implications – contact Community Protection Department, extension 6400.
14. Media interest or specific launch – contact Media Relations, extension 6101.