

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

**10 June, 2013 at 10.30 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham**

Present: **Members of the Authority**
Councillor Edwards (Chair);
Councillor Idrees (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Singh Atwal, Auluck, Chambers, Clinton,
Davis, Delaney, Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Finnegan,
Foster, Hogarth, O'Reilly, Quinnen, Sealey, Singh,
Spence, Tranter, Walsh, Wright, Yardley and Young;
Mr Ager.

Officers: **West Midlands Fire Service**
Chief Fire Officer V Randeniya;
Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer P Loach;
Assistant Chief Fire Officer P Hales;
T Embrey.

Clerk and Monitoring Officer
N Sharma and S Suthi-Nagra.

Treasurer
S Kellas

Apology: Councillor Aston.

13/13 Chair's Announcements

The Chair made reference to:-

- the recent death of Councillor George Davies who had been a member of the Fire Authority since 1989. Details of Councillor Davies's funeral would be circulated to members in due course;
- two new members had been appointed to the Authority for 2013/2014. The Chair informed members that an Induction Session had been planned for the afternoon of 24 June, 2013;

- Councillor Peter O'Neil, member of Wolverhampton City Council and outgoing member of the Authority. The Chair would write to Councillor O'Neill thanking him for his contribution and work on the Authority;
- section 41 members providing an up to date contact number to Tom Embrey to enable members to be notified of issues;
- the members allowance scheme for 2012/13 which had been circulated to all members and district councils and had now become a public document;
- a School Challenge Quiz which was taking place on Saturday 13 July 2013 at 1 pm which would feature children from all over the West Midlands;
- the start times of the Audit Committee meeting at 12.30 pm and the Scrutiny Committee meeting at 1.00 pm followed by a Labour Group meeting at 1.30 pm.

14/13

The Constitution

The Monitoring Officer and the Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer updated members on the requirement to have a Constitution for the Authority so as to set out how the Authority operated, how decisions would be made and the procedures which were to be followed to ensure that these were efficient, transparent and accountable to local citizens. The Constitution would also ensure effective governance in the delivery of agreed priorities, outcomes and objectives.

The Constitution would bring together a number of documents including which decisions would be made at member level at a strategic or operational level and those within the Scheme of Delegations to Officers, the role of the Authority and statutory officers, the Code of Conduct to govern the behaviour of both members and officers and various other policy documents and articles which would meet the requirements of good corporate governance.

The Constitution would be submitted to the Authority at its meeting on 24 June, 2013 for approval and members would have the opportunity to make comments on it.

15/13

Facing the Future – Sir Ken Knight's report

The Chief Fire Officer and Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer outlined the findings of the Sir Ken Knight report following the review into the operational efficiency of fire and rescue authorities in England.

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service (WMFRS) had not been one of the 15 brigades that had been selected for a visit, however, the Service, alongside eleven other brigades, had submitted evidence. Half of the brigades had not provided evidence. Since the report had been publicised, there had been limited major press interest and no press interest locally.

Sir Ken Knight had now finished his term as Chief Fire and Rescue Services Advisor and it was therefore unclear whether a response to the report should be sent to the CLG, who were the point of contact within the report to refer queries to, however, CLG were stating that it was a report of Sir Ken Knight and not Government.

Concern was expressed that approximately £196m was anticipated to be cut by the Treasury within the next spending review process as a result of incorrect data sets and calculations outlined within the report. It was therefore proposed to meet with representatives of the CLG in order to quantify how they had come to the outcome within the statement.

Members noted that the Fire Service had taken huge steps to improve and were visited by several other Authorities who sought to emulate the West Midlands approach to attendance times, which the service had a strong performance in, to avoiding the closure of fire stations and compulsory redundancies.

The views of members were now sought on whether a formal response to the report should be formulated, in particular, to tackle the inaccuracies in the costings of the report. The Association of Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Authorities (AMFRA) would be used as a basis to lobby the CLG and a meeting of the Deputy Chief Fire Officers would be used to look at commonalities and good practice regionally. Areas for improvement suggested within the report would also be looked at.

Members felt that the Authority should make a response in order to share the good practices undertaken by the Service and to improve understanding of the model used. The response would also need to highlight inaccuracies within the report.

(Meeting ended at 12.00 pm)

Contact Officer: Suky Suthi-Nagra Democratic Services Unit Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 0121 569 3479
