

<p><b>Notes of the Policy Planning Forum</b></p>
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**14<sup>th</sup> March 2011, at 10.00 am**  
**at Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham**

**Present:**        **Members of the Authority**  
Councillors Alden, Chambers, Clinton, Davies, Docker,  
Douglas-Maul, Eustace, A Hill, Hinton, Idrees,  
Jackson, Jones, Mulhall, O'Neill, Ryder, Singh,  
Spence, Stevenson, Tagger and, Turner.  
Mr Ager, Mr Denny and Mr Topliss.

**Officers:**        **West Midlands Fire Service**  
Chief Fire Officer – V Randeniya.  
Deputy Chief Fire Officer – M Clark  
A Brandon, M Griffiths, D Johnson and P Loach.

**Clerk and Monitoring Officer**  
N Sharma and S Hancock.

**Treasurer**  
S Kellas.

**Apologies:**    Councillors Andrew and Foster.

6/11 **Chair's Announcements**

Members noted the following announcements:-

- The Authority's insurers were currently dealing with the repair work to Bilston Fire Station following a small fire which had occurred whilst renovations were being undertaken to the appliance bay roof.
- Following their return from Christchurch, New Zealand, 12 search and rescue officers had been immediately deployed to Japan following the devastating earthquake and tsunami on 11<sup>th</sup> March. Two teams would be linking with search and rescue teams from the United States in a town called Ofunato, which had a population of 42,000. HAZMAT officers were working alongside the teams to ensure that the areas they were deployed to were radiation free.

**7/11 Managing Reductions in Operational Staff Numbers and Fire Engine Availability**

Further to Note 3/11 (24<sup>th</sup> January 2011) members received an update on proposals with regards to the Brigade's response methods to automatic fire alarms and the introduction of dual crewing arrangements.

The new approach to dealing with automatic fire alarm (AFA) calls would free up capacity and reduce the movement of appliances on the roads. The number of calls challenged since the start of the pilot in February had increased by 25% and in 30% of cases premise owners had decided themselves that a response was not necessary. From 4<sup>th</sup> April there would be no attendance at AFA calls received between 8am and 8pm, with the exception of hospitals, prisons and other premises with a high life risk. Members were assured that there was no delay in deploying a full response when one was required. The recent publicity campaign on the change had been successful and communications would continue.

Members were informed that from 4<sup>th</sup> April all appliances would be dual staffed. This meant that firefighters would be trained to operate all appliances as opposed to having dedicated crews for special appliances. The new approach would enable more efficient management of crewing arrangements, which would enable the disestablishment of 96 operational posts. It was anticipated that this could be achieved by August 2011 based on an average of six leavers per month and the representative bodies were in support of the proposals. Future work packages would also look at the different types of vehicles that could be used to respond to incidents and how staff could be mobilised to large incidents.

**8/11 Halesowen and Cradley Heath Fire Stations**

Further to the Authority's decision on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2009 (Minute No. 3/09 refers) to close Cradley Heath and Halesowen Fire Stations and open a new single station, members were briefed on proposals to progress the decision.

**9/11 Catering Proposals**

Members were briefed on proposals to undertake a review of catering provision across the Brigade.

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### 10/11 Fire Control Options Consultation

Members were reminded that DCLG had commenced a consultation process on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2011 on the future of fire control. The Authority's draft response was outlined to members

(Meeting ended at 12.24 pm)

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