

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

**11th January 2010, at 10.15 am
at Solihull Fire Station, Solihull**

Present: **Members of the Authority**

Councillors Alden, Clinton, S Davis, Eustace, Gazey, Idrees, Jones, Mulhall, M Robinson, Singh, Skinner, Spence, Turner and Ward;
Mr Ager and Mr Topliss.

Officers: **West Midlands Fire Service**

Chief Fire Officer – V Randeniya;
Deputy Chief Fire Officer – M Clark;
Assistant Chief Officers – A Brandon, J Brown and T Prosser (Acting);
T Embury and P Mika.

Clerk to the Authority

N Sharma, S Phelps, S Hancock and A Sahota.

Treasurer to the Authority

S Kellas.

Apologies: Councillors Chambers, G Davies, Hinton, Ryder and Tagger.
Mr Denny.

1/10 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman expressed his thanks to the Members that had managed to attend today in the severe weather conditions and made a number of announcements as follows:-

- Members were reminded to confirm whether they would be attending the re-arranged Parliamentary Reception on 14th January, 2010. Members who had confirmed their attendance at the previously arranged date were requested to also confirm their attendance on the revised date. Tom Embury from the Chief Fire Officer's Support Team was present and would circulate copies of the day's agenda.

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- A woman firefighter had collapsed during a routine training session at Oldbury Fire House on Monday 4th January, 2010. She had stopped breathing and operational colleagues had administered both CPR and used a defibrillator to resuscitate her. She was admitted to hospital and was undergoing further tests. A joint Service investigation with the Representative Bodies (Fire Brigades' Union) was underway and the Health and Safety Executive had been informed. The consultant at the hospital had praised her colleagues for their life saving actions. Members expressed their best wishes for her speedy recovery to good health.

2/10 Community Fire Safety Update

Members received an update on a number of community fire safety initiatives and the Service's priority areas for 2010-2011.

Although the Service had exceeded targets in terms of the number of Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC), many of the HFSCs carried out were on properties where the occupiers already had a good understanding of fire safety issues. Resources were being targeted at vulnerable and hard to reach communities by using community advocates and faith community officers. Specialist teams would target those with mental illness, hearing impairment and the aged.

Priorities areas for 2010-2011 included safety in the home; vulnerable people; health and well-being; arson and anti-social behaviour; children and young people; the environment and road casualty reduction. All of the priority areas were linked to national indicators.

3/10 Fraud Awareness Training

Members received a presentation from Sandwell Council's Head of Counter Fraud Unit on fraud awareness.

Members were informed of the various categories of fraud, which included theft; false accounting; bribery and corruption; deception; collusion; money laundering; and identity theft. There were four basic elements which were necessary for a fraud to occur: people (either individual or groups); assets to acquire; intent; and opportunity.

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Members were also informed of the consequences of fraud for the Authority, which included monetary loss; decline in performance; lack of trust (both internal and external) and bad publicity for the Authority.

The Authority did not have any issues with fraud at present and had a number of policies and strategies in place to monitor activity and highlight issues for investigation including financial regulations and standing orders; a whistle blowing policy; an anti fraud and corruption policy; and quarterly journal for employees.

Members could help to combat fraud by ensuring that management were implementing their responsibilities and by ensuring that appropriate policies and strategies were in place and in particular through the Audit Committee.

4/10 **Training at Height Facility**

Members received a demonstration of the new training at height facility by officers from the Technical Rescue Unit.

(Meeting ended at 12.45 p.m.)

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