

<p>Notes of the Policy Planning Forum</p>
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25th July, 2005 at 10.00 a.m.
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: **Members of the Authority**

Councillors Birbeck, Bowen, S Davis,
Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Jones, Hinton, Hogarth,
Howard, Hussain, Idrees, Jackson, Lawrence,
Mulhall, Rogers, Ross, Ryder, Singh, Tagger
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 and R Hulland.
A Rotchell.
M. Griffiths – Finance Officer.

Clerk to the Authority

N Summers and G Wythes.

Treasurer to the Authority

L Bateman.

Apologies: Councillors Foster, Matchet and Underhill.

14/05 **Terrorist Attacks**

The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that the Fire Service was a level 1 respondent in local resilience arrangements, and was operating at an appropriate level in response to recent terrorist activity in London. He was attending regular briefings with emergency service colleagues and was confident that resilience procedures were robust.

15/05 **Arson Task Force**

Members heard a presentation from Station Officer Ian Rawlings and Police Sergeant Phil Butler who worked together as the Arson Task Force.

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A target of a 10% reduction in deliberate fires by 2010 from the 2001 baseline had been set nationally. The Task Force had achieved exceptional results against these targets, and an outline of its achievements to date was given. These included working in partnership with local authorities to remove abandoned, scrap and untaxed vehicles quickly from the streets; working with local businesses on fire safety; work with schools to deter malicious calls and arson attacks; target hardening; developing partnership work between the Police and Fire Services on dealing with arson including joint training and data sharing; and drawing down external funding.

This work had resulted in a substantial reduction in arson attacks in the West Midlands, for instance, a 26% reduction in deliberate fires in dwellings and a 35% reduction in vehicle fires in 2004/05. It was hoped to continue this trend in 2005/06.

Members expressed their appreciation of the commitment of the officers involved in this initiative, and applauded the excellent results that were being achieved.

Members referred to recent arson attacks on schools, and their concerns that damage could have been minimised if sprinkler systems had been installed. The Chief Fire Officer indicated that consultation was currently taking place on regulations with regard to the installation of sprinkler systems. Members felt that sprinkler systems should be mandatory in premises such as schools and the Chief Fire Officer undertook to include these comments in the Authority's response to the consultation document.

16/05 Update on Business Plan Objectives

The Chief Fire Officer updated Members on progress against objectives set out in the 10-year scan in the Business Plan, all of which were on target.

The Authority's Comprehensive Performance Assessment result would be announced publicly on 27th July 2005.

(Meeting ended at 11.50 a.m.)

<p><i>Contact Officer: Georgina Wythes Democratic Services Unit Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 0121 569 3791</i></p>
