

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

28th January, 2008 at 10.00 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: **Members of the Authority**

Councillors Alden, Birbeck, S Davis,
Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Gazey, Hinton, Howard,
Hussain, Jackson, Ryder, Singh, Spence,
Stevenson, Tagger, Turner, Wild and Wilkes;
Mr Topliss.

Officers: **West Midlands Fire Service**

Chief Fire Officer – Frank Sheehan;
Deputy Chief Fire Officer – Vij Randeniya
Assistant Chief Officers – Alan Brandon, John Brown
and Martin Clark;
John McNaughton, Mike Griffiths and David Johnson.

Clerk to the Authority

Neeraj Sharma, Sue Phelps, Stephnie Hancock and
Georgina Wythes.

Treasurer to the Authority

Lynda Bateman.

Apologies: Councillors Bowen, G Davies, Foster and Mulhall.

1/08 **Introductions and Announcements**

The Chief Fire Officer indicated that a fire fought in Erdington over the weekend had been a good illustration of the benefits of the modernisation programme and its emphasis on prevention work. The premises had been identified as a high-risk building following a previous incident and fire detectors had been fitted. The detectors had given an early alert to the fire which had occurred over the weekend and many lives had been saved as a result.

He also reported that the Brigade had given assistance to Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service in the organisation of the

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memorial service for the four firefighters who had died in the recent fire at Atherstone-on-Stour. The Authority and Brigade had been represented at the service which had been a fine tribute to those who had lost their lives.

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that a watch commander with 43 years service was currently in hospital following a heart attack whilst on duty.

2/08 Independent Remuneration Panel

The Clerk reported on the inaugural meeting of the Independent Remuneration Panel which had taken place on 21st January, 2008.

The Panel had identified a number of issues to be addressed, including:

- Level of special responsibility allowance for Chair and Vice Chair of Audit Committee
- Frequency of meetings of the Joint Consultative Panel and Appeals Committee
- Regional working and the impact of the Fire Control Local Authority Controlled Company
- Payment of travel and subsistence to Lead Members
- Payments to independent Members including dependent carer's allowance.

Members had been invited to complete a questionnaire, and the Panel wished to interview a number of members.

The Panel would reconvene on 11th February, 2008 with further meetings as necessary during March. It was hoped to report to the Policy Planning Forum and Executive Committee on 31st March, 2008, with a revised scheme being recommended for adoption at the Authority meeting on 21st April, 2008.

3/08 Budget 2008/09 to 2010/11

The Treasurer reported on the Authority's current financial position and the likely precept for 2008/2009 and the following two financial years, based on a forecast of the next three years' revenue and capital budgets and the likely three year financial settlement from the Government.

Budget preparation work was continuing and a final report would be

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made to the Authority on 11th February, 2008.

Members discussed the approach from the West Midlands Districts' Leaders for a reduction in the proposed precept. Members indicated support for a 2.95% precept increase in 2008/09.

4/08

Annual Service Plan – Action Plan – Consultation Outcomes and Responses

The Director of Corporate Planning and Support reported on the outcome of the consultation process in respect of proposals in the Annual Service Plan Action Plan and the proposed responses.

The Chief Fire Officer undertook to amend the responses to be given in respect of a number of issues raised by the consultation in the light of Members' comments.

(Meeting ended at 11.55 am)

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