

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

25th January 2010, at 10.00 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

Present: **Members of the Authority**

Councillors Ali Khan, Chambers, Clinton, S Davis, Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Gazey, Hinton, Mulhall, O'Neil, Ryder, Singh, Skinner, Spence, Stevenson, Tagger, Turner and Ward;
Mr Ager, Mr Denny and Mr Topliss.

Officers: **West Midlands Fire Service**

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

Clerk to the Authority

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

Treasurer to the Authority

S Kellas.

Apologies: Councillors Alden, G Davies, Idrees, Jones and M Robinson.

5/10

Announcements

The Chief Fire Officer reported that 14 personnel from West Midlands Fire Service had travelled to Haiti to assist with the rescue effort following the earthquake on 12th January 2010. 12 had now returned home, three of whom had appeared on breakfast television today talking about their experience of rescuing a little girl trapped in the debris. Members and Officers praised the efforts of the staff.

The Chairman reported on the success of the recent parliamentary visit on 14th January 2010. Members felt that the visit had been very worthwhile and were hopeful that their discussions would result in some positive outcomes. In particular, MPs had responded positively during discussions regarding the introduction of compulsory sprinklers in new buildings. Officers would be following up on the matters discussed.

Policy Planning Forum – 25th January, 2010

Cllr Clinton briefed Members on a recent visit she had undertaken to Erdington Fire Station, where she had had an opportunity to observe officers in training.

6/10 **Community Fire Safety Update – Anti Social Behaviour and Arson**

Members received a further update on community fire safety initiatives in West Midlands.

West Midlands' Arson Task Force (ATF) was the most developed in the UK and the number of arson fires in West Midlands was 30-35% less than the national average. However, the recession had had a detrimental affect on current performance.

Resources were currently being targeted to high risk areas and specialist support had been deployed to elevated risk areas such as schools and businesses. Awareness raising and education was continuing for the wider community, including a residential education programme for children on the border of criminal activity.

The recession presented a challenge for the Service due to increases in the number of empty properties, business failures and public sector funding reductions, which could affect the funding of the Arson Task Forces. Work would therefore continue to promote engagement and encourage support.

7/10 **Budget and Precept 2010/2011**

The Director of Finance and Procurement updated Members on the Authority's current financial position and the projected precept increases in 2010/2011, 2011/2012 and 2012/2013, based on a forecast of 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 made to the Authority on 15th February, 2010.

Members indicated support for a 2.25% precept increase in 2010/11.

(Meeting ended at 12.07 p.m.)

*Contact Officer: Amarjit Sahota
Democratic Services Unit
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
0121 569 3189*