

## **Notes of the Policy Planning Forum**

**10 December, 2012 at 10.30 am  
at Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham**

**Present:**           **Members of the Authority**  
Councillor Edwards (Chair);  
Councillor Idrees (Vice-Chair);  
Councillors Aston, Auluck, Chambers, Clinton,  
Davies, Davis, Delaney, Douglas-Maul, Eustace,  
Foster, Hogarth, O'Neill, O'Reilly, Sealey, Singh,  
Spence, Tranter, Walsh, Ward and Yardley.

**Officers:**           **West Midlands Fire Service**  
Chief Fire Officer Vij Randeniya;  
Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer P Hale  
Director Resources Mike Griffiths;  
Director Human Resources David Johnson

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

**Treasurer**  
S Kellas

**Apologies:**       Councillors Singh Atwal, Wright and Young.  
Mr Ager

### **24/12   Chair's Announcements**

The Chair informed members that there would be a change to the way food and refreshments were available at headquarters from the end of the year.

### **25/12   Budget 2013/2014-2016/2017**

The Director of Resources updated members on the Authority's budget position ahead of the budget settlement announcement, which was anticipated by the end of the year.

Current national indications suggested a 9% reduction in year 3 and members noted that reductions in public spending were expected to continue into the foreseeable future.

The government had offered authorities financial incentive equivalent to 1% of their budget to freeze council tax for a further year, which was equivalent to around £400k for the Authority. Members also noted the financial implications of opting for a council tax increase of 2%.

A number of key issues would impact on the Authority's future budget position including the impact of business rates retention by local authorities, the impact of localised council tax benefit, and the future grant to council tax funding ratio.

Members noted that general balances remained healthy; however, the need to draw upon them in the future to ensure a balanced budget could not be ruled out. The position with regards to earmarked reserves was also noted.

The position with regards to capital funding was still unclear. Three funding bids had been submitted to the government in relation to the merger of Cradley Heath and Halesowen fire stations, low risk flexible crewing and brigade response vehicles.

District leaders would be meeting on 14 December, 2012. It was agreed that members would be sent a briefing note on the position once the settlement was known.

## **26/12 Community Safety Strategy (IRM) – Public Consultation**

It was reported that a consultation on the content of the Service's Community Safety Strategy (its Integrated Risk Management Plan) had commenced on 19 November, 2012.

A number of local consultation events would be held out in the field, with at least two taking place in each of the seven districts. Members were invited to promote and support these events with the public and partners.

Members took part in a workshop exercise and fed back their views on the consultation.

The consultation was due to end on 4 January, 2013 and findings would be reported to the meeting on 21 January, 2013. The final Strategy document would be presented to the Authority at its meeting on 18 February, 2013.

## 27/12 **Member Development**

The Director Human Resources reported that a review and re-focus of member development activity was currently taking place.

The re-focus would seek to ensure that members received sufficient fire authority related development, which was important due to the increasingly complex demands and growing expectations on fire and rescue services; the challenge of budget cuts creating a climate of unprecedented change and transformation and the expectation of improved engagement between managers and members to apply appropriate challenge and scrutiny.

The aim was to ensure that an adequate range of learning and development activities was available to members, which contributed to achievement of the Authority's core values and objectives.

On 21 January, 2013 the Executive Committee would be asked to consider options for establishing and maintaining a learning and development process for members that was member-driven, relevant, and would lead to an improved take-up of learning opportunities.

(Meeting ended at 12.12 pm)

<p><i>Contact Officer: Stephnie Hancock Democratic Services Unit Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 0121 569 3189</i></p>
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