

**Notes of the Policy Planning Forum**

**7 November, 2011 at 10.50 am**  
**at Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham**

- Present:**        **Members of the Authority**  
Councillors, Ali Khan, Andrew, Chambers, Clinton, Davis, Davies, Delaney, Docker, Douglas-Maul, Edwards, Eustace, Foster, Griffiths, Hogarth, O'Neill, Ryder, Singh, Spence, Tranter and Turner.  
Mr Topliss.
- Officers:**        **West Midlands Fire Service**  
Chief Fire Officer – V Randeniya.  
A Brandon, M Griffiths, P Loach, D Johnson and D Walton.
- Clerk and Monitoring Officer**  
N Sharma, S Kellas and S Hancock.
- Apologies:**        Councillors Alden and Idrees and Mr Ager.

22/11    **Chief Fire Officer and Chair's Announcements**

The Association for Metropolitan Fire Authorities had written a position statement with regards to the lobbying of government, which was available on the Committee Management Information System (CMIS).

The Chair, Chief Fire Officer and Director of Finance and Procurement would be visiting the Houses of Parliament on 22 November, 2011 to lobby the government about the proposed spending cuts.

23/11    **Localism Bill**

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer updated Members on the most recent changes to governance arrangements that were proposed in the Localism Bill, particularly in relation to the standards regime.

The Chief Fire Officer added that the Bill had a wide remit and there would be other elements of it that would affect the Fire Service.

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Members would be briefed/trained on changes as necessary.

### 24/11 The Plan 2012-2015 and Council Tax Freeze

Members were informed that The Plan was currently being refreshed.

Members broke out into workshop teams and were asked to give their views on the appropriateness of The Plan's 13 objectives.

The refreshed Plan would be reported to the Authority in February, 2012.

It was reported that the Government had recently announced proposals to offer local authorities a financial incentive to freeze council tax for a further year (2012/13). Members discussed the implications of this and noted that the uncertainty with regards to the Authority's financial position in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

### 25/11 Cradley Heath and Halesowen Fire Stations

Members were briefed on the outcome of the public consultation in the proposed reduction in the number of fire engines at Cradley Heath and Halesowen Fire Stations. Approval had previously been given to replace both stations with a single facility.

The outcome of the consultation had revealed that the public preferred to keep two appliances at the merged facility. However, the Chief Fire Officer remained of the view that there was a sound business case to support the reduction down to one appliance.

A number of options were being considered with regards to the location of the merged station and Members would be kept abreast of developments.

### 26/11 Trades Dispute

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the Fire Brigades' Union had indicated that it would not be balloting its members to strike on 30 November, 2011.

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Unison members had however voted in support of strike action, which would have implications for the Service, however it was felt that this stage that they could be managed in-house.

(Meeting ended at 1.04 pm)

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