

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

5 September at 10.30 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: **Members of the Authority**
Councillors Alden, Ali Khan, Chambers, Clinton, Davis, Delaney, Docker, Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Edwards, Finnegan, Foster, Griffiths, Hogarth, Idrees, O'Neill, Ryder, Sandy, Singh, Spence, Stevenson, Tranter and Turner.
Mr Ager and Mr Topliss.

Officers: **West Midlands Fire Service**
Chief Fire Officer – V Randeniya.
A Brandon, M Griffiths, P Loach and D Johnson.

Clerk and Monitoring Officer
N Sharma and S Hancock.

Apologies: Councillors Andrew, Davies and Walsh and Mr Denny.

17/11 Civil Disturbances

The Chief Fire Officer reported on the Brigade's involvement in responding to the civil disturbances in West Midlands which had taken place on 8 August 2011 and over subsequent days, during which the Brigade had responded to a total of 272 incidents.

A multi-agency incident room had been set up at the Police Learning and Development Resource Centre (Tally Ho) at which two senior Fire Service officers had been present, 24 hours a day for a number of days.

Fire Control had been extremely busy and staff had worked at maximum capacity under extreme pressure. Reference was also made to the bravery and professionalism of the fire officers on the ground, some of whom had been involved in situations where they were under threat from the rioters.

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The events had highlighted the need to have flexible policies and procedures in place to deal with changing situations. They had also highlighted the need for individual authorities to have their own robust resilience plans in place to deal with circumstances where national resilience was weak.

The Brigade's citizenship work with young people would continue. It was noted that the West Midlands Fire Service was a respected brand and its fire programmes were very successful.

The Chief Fire Officer commended the high spirits, courage and professionalism of Fire Service staff during the incidents.

The Chair added that all staff had been written to express the Authority's appreciation for the exceptional work they had done during the incidents and the risk they had endured to maintain a professional response. He emphasised the importance of maintaining the Authority's resources to maintain resilience.

Councillor Turner asked that statistics on progress against performance indicators highlight where incidents were related to the riots to ensure a clear picture of the service's overall performance.

18/11 Building Upon Success Programme Update

Members received an update on progress with the Building Upon Success Programme.

A total of £7.2 million savings had been achieved so far, with a further £3 million to be delivered by 2012/2013. The level of grant funding for 2013/14 and 2014/2015 was still unknown. A number of reviews were currently underway to address potential losses in 2013/14 and 2014/15 and options for income generation were being considered to minimise the impact of such losses.

Public consultation meetings had recently taken place regarding the reduction from two 24-hour appliances to a single 24-hour appliance on the new fire station which would replace stations in Cradley Heath and Halesowen. Overall public feeling was in favour of retaining two appliances.

19/11 **Government Consultations**

Members were briefed on the detail of the following Government consultations:-

- Open Public Services White Paper.
- Amendments to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992 and the New Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006.
- Local Government Resource Review.

Reports would be presented to the Executive Committee on the Authority's proposed responses in due course.

20/11 **Council Tax Options**

The Chair reported that a briefing paper had been circulated to Section 41 members for discussion with their district leaders on the Authority's options with regards to the 2012/13 precept. It was noted that West Midlands was currently the lowest precepting authority of all of the metropolitan fire authorities.

A number of reviews were currently underway to address potential losses in 2013/14 and 2014/15. In addition, a review of the use of headquarters was being undertaken to ensure that maximum use of the building was achieved to make space available for lease to the private sector.

(Meeting ended at 12.33 pm)

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