

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

17th December, 2007 at 10.00 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: **Members of the Authority**

Councillors Alden, Birbeck, S Davis,
Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Foster, Hinton, Howard,
Hussain, Idrees, Jackson, Mulhall, Singh,
Stevenson, Tagger, Ward, Wild and Wilkes;
Messrs Bagley, Denny and 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;
Bob Deeks, 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 Ali Khan, Bowen, Ryder and Turner.

22/07 **Budget 2008/09 to 2010/11**

Members received a presentation with regard to 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.

A number of national issues might also impact on budget setting over the next three years but the funding implications were not clear at this point: new dimension funding; regional fire control; Fire Link; and the need to review firefighter and command training.

Budget preparation work was continuing and further reports would be

Policy Planning Forum – 17th December, 2007

made to the Policy Planning Forum on 28th January, 2008 and the Authority on 11th February, 2008.

The Treasurer undertook to provide information to Members in the next budget presentation with regard to the inflation calculation on various heads within the supplies and services budget.

23/07 Regional Fire Control – Local Authority Controlled Company

Members received a presentation on progress with the establishment of the local authority controlled company that would manage the West Midlands Regional Fire Control. The Regional Fire Control building was almost complete and would be handed over to the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) at the end of December 2007.

The local authority controlled company, West Midlands Fire Services Control Centre Limited, had been established on 19th February, 2007. The functions of the company were explained. The Regional Control Centre Director had been appointed and would take up his post shortly; and the recruitment of other senior staff was in hand.

All constituent Authorities had entered into a Memorandum of Understanding and Articles of Association in respect of the Company. A Members' Agreement would deal with dispute resolution, cost apportionment, exit provisions and circumstances where unanimous decisions were necessary. It was anticipated that the Members' Agreement would be presented to the Executive Committee for approval in January 2008.

The West Midlands Regional Management Board Programme Board at a recent meeting had considered proposals for cost apportionment, and was recommending calculation on the basis of population for at least three years. Members expressed concern that this funding formula was disadvantageous to this Authority. It was understood that there would be opportunities to review the funding formula and the articles of association of the Company from time to time.

(Meeting ended at 11.47 am)

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