

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

7th September, 2009, at 10.00 am
at Fire Service Training Centre, Dartmouth Road, Smethwick

Present: **Members of the Authority**

Councillors Alden, Chambers, Clinton, S Davis, Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Gazey, Hinton, Mulhall, O'Neill, F Robinson, M Robinson, Skinner, Spence, Stevenson, Tagger, Turner, and Ward;
Mr Ager, Mr Bagley and Mr Topliss.

Officers: **West Midlands Fire Service**

Chief Fire Officer – V Randeniya;
Deputy Chief Fire Officer – M Clark;
Assistant Chief Officers – A Brandon, J Brown and T Prosser (Acting);
T Embury, M Hamilton-Russell, P Mika, J Rees and N Southon.

Clerk to the Authority

N Sharma, G Wythes, S Hancock and A Sahota.

Treasurer to the Authority

S Kellas.

Apologies: Councillors G Davies, Idrees, Jones, Ryder and Singh;
Mr Denny.

20/09 **Chief Fire Officer's Announcements**

The Chief Fire Officer welcomed Members to the meeting and to the Training Centre.

The Chief Fire Officer introduced Mark Hamilton-Russell, the Brigade's Strategic Corporate Communications Manager.

21/09 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman made a number of announcements as follows:

- The Fire Service Band's 25th Anniversary Concert would be taking place on Saturday 10th October, 2009 at St Augustine of Hippo Parish Church in Edgbaston.
- The Brigade's Annual Service would be taking place on Sunday 6th December, 2009 at St Martins in the Bull Ring at 4.30 pm and Members were encouraged to attend.
- The annual visit to the Houses of Parliament would be taking place on Wednesday 9th December, 2009. Members expressed concern that the event had previously not been well attended by MPs. Consideration would therefore be given to contacting MPs in advance of the visit to encourage them to attend.
- The Brigade had recently hosted a thought provoking dramatic performance for staff and partner agencies on the progress of equality in the workplace. Feedback on the performance had been very positive.
- The Brigade had welcomed Stephanie Moore MBE, former England footballer Bobby Moore's widow, to the training centre on Friday 31st July, 2009 to the Pass Out parade for the Brigade's latest trainees. A cheque for £2,000 had been presented on behalf of the Brigade to the Bobby Moore Fund for Cancer Research UK. The Chairman informed Members that contributions could still be made to the Bobby Moore Fund for Cancer Research UK.
- A number of contractors and sub contactors who had been involved in the build, design and fitting out of the new Fire Service Headquarters had unfortunately gone into administration. The Headquarters Relocation Project Group, in consultation with the Authority's legal advisors, was dealing with the consequences relevant to the Authority.
- The Brigade Employee Opinion Survey would be launched on 7th September, 2009. The survey would seek to establish employees' views on: the employer; job satisfaction; teams; change management; equality and diversity; performance; communication; and learning and development.

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- The Chairman and Members welcomed back Stephnie Hancock, from the Clerk's office, who had recently returned from maternity leave.

22/09 West Bromwich Cycle Team

Three members of the West Bromwich cycle team attended the Training Centre to show Members their cycles and related equipment, as well as explaining the work that they undertook in educating the public about a range of risk reduction and control measures.

The cycle team targeted hot spots that suffered from high levels of secondary arson fire incidents. They aimed to reduce the logistical impact on front line resources and reduce financial and environmental costs to the community from these types of incidents.

23/09 Tour of the Hydra and Minerva Training Suites

Members took a guided tour of the Hydra and Minerva Training Suites located in the Training Centre. The Suites housed state of the art technology, to train officers in command and control scenarios

24/09 Environmental Strategy and the Nottingham Declaration

Environmental Strategy

Further to Minute No. 21/08, Members received an update on the implementation of the Brigade's Environmental Strategy. A detailed report on the matter would be presented to the Authority on 21st September, 2009.

Members were informed of the key drivers for climate change and that preventable fires in the UK contributed to an estimated 2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide nationally each year.

Future work to progress the Strategy included: partnership with the Meteorological Office on local impacts of climate change; energy performance measures and targets; recycling fire water run off from incidents; introducing low carbon technology for heating stations; use of green technology on sites; and being the lead for the Chief Fire Officer Association (CFOA) Climate Change Group.

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Nottingham Declaration

Members were informed that the Nottingham Declaration was a pledge by authorities to address causes and impacts of climate change and to demonstrate public commitment to the climate change agenda. The Nottingham Declaration would improve local quality of life and help achieve excellent performance.

The Declaration had been established in 2000 and over 300 authorities had signed up to the declaration, which included local authorities and fire and rescue authorities.

25/09 Fatal High Rise Fire, Lakanal House, Camberwell, London

Members received an overview of the recent fatal fire at Lakanal House in London and the actions the Brigade had taken in response to it.

The Secretary of State had ordered an immediate review of the incident. The final report was likely to have implications for local authorities and its social housing programme as well for fire and rescue authorities.

In response to the incident, the Brigade had worked with local authorities to identify blocks of flats of similar design. Two blocks had been identified in Coventry and work had been undertaken with partners to ensure the safety of the residents in the identified blocks. A joint Working Group had also been set up, which was reviewing the Brigade's Operational High Rise Policy.

Members again raised concerns at the lack of Central Government support for the implementation of legislation requiring sprinklers in social housing and new builds. It was reported that the Welsh and Scottish Governments were currently taking action on the issue. However, the next opportunity for the English Government to review the matter was 2013. Members and officers would continue to lobby the Government in the meantime.

26/09 Member Development Charter

The Monitoring Officer informed Members of the proposal for the Authority to sign up to the West Midlands Member Development Charter.

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The Charter would represent a statement of the Authority's commitment to developing and supporting its elected Members. Its aim was for authorities to adopt a structured approach to Member development which directly contributed to the performance of the Authority.

It was reported that only a few Fire and Rescue authorities in the UK had been awarded the Member Development Charter through their respective regional organisations. If Members gave approval to sign up to the Charter, West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority would be the first fire authority in the region to obtain the Charter.

An authority may choose to work towards Full Charter Status or the Primary Level. The Monitoring Officer recommended that the Authority initially worked towards the Primary Level as this ensured that the authority had the building blocks in place before progressing towards the Full Charter.

As part of the agreement, the Authority would need to nominate two Members and two officers to act as peer assessors. They would need to undertake the appropriate training and be prepared to carry out peer assessments in other West Midlands authorities as and when required.

Once Charter status had been achieved, authorities were required to demonstrate that they could maintain their high standards in Member Development and Training by being re-assessed every three years.

A detailed report on the matter would be presented to the Authority on 21st September, 2009.

27/09 Additional Comments on the Proposed Response to Audit Commission Fees

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer informed Members that the Authority's response to the Audit Commission on its proposed fees had been submitted on 4th September, 2009, following consultation with Members on a draft response.

(Meeting ended at 12.30 pm)

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