

<p>Notes of the Policy Planning Forum</p>

29th January, 2007 at 10.00 a.m.
at Walsall Fire Station, Blue Lane West, Walsall

Present: **Members of the Authority**

Councillors Bowen, G Davies, S Davis, Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Foster, Gazey, Hinton, Hogarth, Howard, Hussain, Idrees, Jackson, Pitt, Rogers, Ryder, Singh, Spence, Stevenson, Tagger and Ward;
Mr Topliss.

Officers: **West Midlands Fire Service**

Chief Fire Officer – F Sheehan;
Deputy Chief Fire Officer – V Randeniya;
Assistant Chief Officers – A Brandon M Clark and J Brown;
R Deeks, M Griffiths and J McNaughton.

Clerk to the Authority

N Sharma, S Phelps, S Hopcroft and G Wythes.

Treasurer to the Authority

L Bateman.

Apologies: Councillors Birbeck, Jones, Mulhall and Ross.

1/07 **Introductions and Announcements**

The Chief Fire Officer announced that the contract for the design and build of the new Fire Service Headquarters was due to be signed on 5th February, 2007. Arrangements would be made for Members to visit the site of the new Headquarters on 12th February, 2007 at the conclusion of the Authority meeting.

The Chief Fire Officer also referred to issues around the introduction of Continuous Professional Development payments that was to be the subject of a report to the Executive Committee.

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He reported good progress with the implementation of the new shift arrangements. He advised that following changes to the work routines on stations, there had been a significant increase in productivity. Arising from the work of the Joint Working Group with the Fire Brigades Union, agreement had been reached on the provision of suitable rest facilities. Station activity had generally increased in terms of training and prevention-based activity, as had the number of home fire safety checks carried out.

The Chief Fire Officer indicated that the offer of the post of Head of Human Resources had unfortunately been declined. He expressed his disappointment, and regret for the considerable time invested by the Appointments Committee in this matter. Discussions were in hand with Sandwell MBC with regard to re-advertisement of the post and the possibility of an interim appointment for six to nine months until the post could be permanently filled.

The Chief Fire Officer also reported that the results of the latest corporate assessment had been received. The Authority had scored level 3 in all aspects of the assessment, and had been rated as 'performing well'. The proposal to keep the precept increase below 3% would reinforce the Authority's status as providing good value for money for the Council taxpayer.

2/07

Budget 2007/08 to 2009/10

Members received a presentation updating the position with regard to the budget 2007/08 to 2009/10 and the proposal to keep the precept increase below 3%.

Information had now been received with regard to the impact of the introduction of Continuous Professional Development payments and confirmation of grant to be received in 2007/08. It was also anticipated that there would be a slight increase in the Council tax base across the West Midlands. A precept figure of 2.9% was therefore still achievable in 2007/08 without drawing on balances.

It was difficult to forecast the position for 2008/09 and 2009/10 until the results of the forthcoming corporate spending review and pay deals, and the requirements for efficiency savings, were known.

Capital spending in 2007/08 and 2008/09 would be high because of the Headquarters redevelopment, reducing to normal levels in 2009/10.

The Authority at its meeting on 12th February, 2007 would be asked to

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determine the capital and revenue budget and precept for 2007/08.

3/07

Technical Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Demonstration

Members heard a brief overview of the Service's technical rescue capability and then saw a demonstration of some of the latest vehicles and equipment in use in the Brigade.

(Meeting ended at 12.25 pm)

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