

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

11th October 2010 at 10.00 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: **Members of the Authority**
Councillors Alden, Andrew, Bennett, Chambers,
Clinton, Davies, Docker, Douglas-Maul, Eustace,
Foster, Hodgson, Idrees, Jackson, Jones, Mulhall,
O'Neill, Ryder, Spence, Stevenson, Turner and Walsh
and Whitehouse;
Mr Ager and Mr Topliss.

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

Clerk to the Authority
S Hancock, S Phelps and N Sharma.

Treasurer to the Authority
S Kellas.

Apologies: Councillors A Hill, M Hill, Hinton and Tagger.

21/10 **Announcements**

The Chairman and Chief Fire Officer made the following announcements:-

- The West Midlands Ambulance Service Trust had held their Board meeting and Annual General Meeting at Headquarters on 29th September 2010. The event had been a great success and had concluded with a tour of Safeside.
- The Brigade's annual Christmas Carol Service was taking place at St Martin's Church in Birmingham on 5th December 2010. All members were encouraged to attend.
- West Midlands Fire Service teams had come first and second in the National Breathing Apparatus Competition finals on 9th October 2010. The crews had performed exceptionally well in a very testing environment.

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- The Chief Fire Officer had represented the Chief Fire Officers' Association [CFOA] at the Conservative Party Conference last week. He attended the CFOA fringe meeting on 4th October, 2010, and also the Electrical Safety Council fringe meeting on 5th October 2010.
- Birmingham City Council had submitted a bid on Total Place to the Treasury. The Authority had been asked for comments, along with the Police, because the bid made reference to their budgets. However, a window of just one hour had been given for comments to be made which it was not felt was acceptable or in the spirit of partnership working. The Chief Fire Officer would be make representations to the Chief Executive of Birmingham City Council on the matter.

22/10 Equality and Diversity Update

The Director Human Resources and the Lead Member for Equality and Diversity provided Members with an update on equality and diversity work in the organisation and the implications of the Single Equality Act 2010.

Equality and diversity was very much a front line issue for the Fire Service and not just an add-on. Equality and diversity data was invaluable in assisting the Authority to target its resources at high risk groups. National recognition had been received for the Brigade's Product, Media, Place initiative which had utilised innovative ways to reach hard to engage communities to get fire safety messages across. (Minute No 15/10 of 12th July 2010 refers.)

Work internal to the organisation, such as the development of Core Values and an Employee Relations Framework had resulted in an increase in the number of black and minority ethnic employees and better retention rates.

A Corporate Equality Action Plan was currently being written in response to the new Single Equality Act and this would also link into the work of the Building Upon Success Programme.

23/10 Localisation

The Director Operations sought Members' views on the Government's localism agenda and the most appropriate way to address local needs across the conurbation and ensure appropriate levels of engagement with employees. A draft position statement was circulated and

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Members were asked to submit their comments.

Birmingham City Council had recently launched a consultation document entitled “Future Shape of Localism in Birmingham”. The proposals within the document were likely to impact upon the way the Service operated within the city and it was therefore necessary to make a submission for consideration prior to final decision making in November. A draft response was circulated and Members were asked to submit their comments.

24/10 **Building Upon Success (BuS) Project**

Members received an update on the BuS project.

The review of back office services had been completed and Corporate Board was considering the reports that had been produced.

Engagement continued and a number of challenge and scrutiny days had been held from which a number of ideas had been generated from the workforce and representative bodies.

The outcome of the Government’s Comprehensive Spending Review was anticipated on 20th October, 2010, and announcements on fire service budgets were expected in November 2010. Work on the project would continue in the meantime and Members would continue to receive updates.

(Meeting ended at 12.20 p.m.)

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