

**Minutes of a Meeting of the
West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority**

17th February, 2014 at 11.00 am
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Edwards [Chair];
Councillor Idrees [Vice Chair];
Councillors Singh Atwal, Chambers, Clinton,
Collingswood, Davis, Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Finnegan,
Foster, Hogarth, Mottram JP, O'Reilly, Quinnen, Sealey,
Shackleton, Tranter, Walsh, Wright and Young.

Apologies: Councillors Aston, Auluck, Delaney, Singh, Spence and
Yardley;
Mr Ager.

1/14 **Declaration of Interest**

Councillor Edwards declared a non-disclosable pecuniary interest in
Minute No 5/14 below (Monitoring of Finances).

2/14 **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair introduced Sabiel Mughall, a business administration
apprentice, to the meeting. Sabiel would be observing what goes on
at the Authority.

The Members' Room was now open and Julie Connor would be there
at the end of the meeting to show members how to log in, use the
printer, etc.

At the request of the Chair, the Chief Fire Officer reported on the
deployment of firefighters to flooded areas, and in particular to
Berkshire, the Somerset Levels and Worcestershire. Such assistance
was part of a mutual aid agreement and the recoup of costs depended
on whether a particular trigger was reached.

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The Chief Fire Officer reported that the high rise incident facility at the Oldbury Fire Station site would be handed over at the end of February. There would be some “test” burns (to remove paint which burned darkened smoke) from March onwards. The facility had received national interest – for best firefighters and processes.

The Chair invited Councillor Clinton to give members an open invitation to a road safety event being held between 11.00 am and 4.00 pm on Saturday 29th March, 2014 at the Greenwood Academy, Farnborough Road, Castle Vale. The event would be led by firefighter Sam Lewis and a company from Gloucester would be bringing its “vehicle” and goggles which simulated the effects of driving under the influence of drugs and drink. Members were asked to make as many 15-16 year olds aware of the event and get them to the Academy if possible. The Chair thanked Councillor Clinton for her leadership of the Authority’s road safety agenda.

3/14 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 25th November, 2013, be confirmed as a correct record, subject to Minute No. 83/13 being amended by the addition of the following at the end of resolution (3):-
“and in particular business cases be also submitted for the proposals for Kings Norton and Coventry Fire Stations”.

4/14 Budget and Precept 2014/2015 and Budget Forecast 2015/2016 to 2017/2018

The Authority considered a report on the Capital Programme for 2014/15 to 2017/18, the prudential indicators relating to the Authority’s capital financing requirements, the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, the Treasury Management Strategy, the revenue budget and the consequent precept level and resultant amount payable by each constituent District Council.

The Comprehensive Spending Review had indicated that grant funding for fire and rescue authorities would be reduced by 25% over a four year period and that the largest portion of the reduction would occur in years 3 and 4 of the settlement. The settlement for 2011/12 and 2012/13 represented an overall grant reduction of £10.164m (12.58%) over two years.

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On 8 October 2012, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had announced that the Government would make funding available for a third year to enable councils to freeze their Council Tax in 2013/14.

The grant would be equivalent to a 1% increase to the 2012/13 council tax, payable for two years (2013/14 and 2014/15). In addition, the Government proposed a referendum threshold for any Local Authority increasing its Council tax by more than 2%.

On 18 December 2013, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government had confirmed the provisional settlement for 2014/15 at £68,146m resulting in a grant reduction of £5.616m.

On 5 February 2014, the Department of Communities and Local Government confirmed the Authority's 2014/15 total grant figure, with a slight increase of £9k to the grant figure announced in the provisional settlement resulting in total grant funding of £68.155m (formula grant £67.202m and 2011/12 council tax freeze grant £0.953m). In addition, the Authority's provisional grant figure for 2015/16 was indicated at £62.313m. This represented a reduction of £5.842m compared to the 2014/15 grant.

It was now proposed to introduce a Band D Council Tax increase of 1.99% in 2014/15.

The Treasurer gave assurances in accordance with sections 25-27 of the Local Government Act 2003 that the budget preparation had been robust and that the level of reserves was sustainable and sufficient.

Whilst members of the principal opposition party acknowledged the financial position of the Authority, they expressed concerns at the proposed increase.

The Chair reiterated that the proposals would assist the Authority in meeting its base budget without triggering a referendum. The costs of referendums were prohibitive but the Authority might need to consider such an option for its 2016/17 budget proposals.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Authority's Revenue Budget for 2014/2015 of £34.710m as now submitted, be approved;

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- (2) that the Authority's capital programme for 2014/2015 to 2017/2018, as now submitted, be approved;
- (3) that the Authority's Treasury Management Strategy, which includes the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, and the Prudential Indicators, as now submitted, be approved;
- (4) that it be noted that the constituent District Councils have formally set their Council Tax bases for the year 2014/2015 in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 made under Section 33(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as follows:

	Tax Base
Birmingham	230,432.00
	0
Coventry	73,201.00
Dudley	84,087.69
Sandwell	66,874.40
Solihull	71,229.00
Walsall	61,523.32
Wolverhampton	<u>57,029.97</u>
	<u>644,377.38</u>

- (5) that the following amounts be now calculated by the Authority for the year 2014/2015 in accordance with Sections 40 to 48 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:
 - (i) £112,383,000 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 42A (2)(a) to (d) of the Act;
 - (ii) £77,673,000 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 42A (3)(a) to (b) of the Act;

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- (iii) £34,710,000 being the amount by which the aggregate at (5)(i) above exceeds the aggregate at (5)(ii) above calculated by the Authority in accordance with Section 42A (4) of the Act as its council tax requirement for the year;
- (iv) £53.87 being the amount at (5)(iii) above divided by the total amount at (4) above, calculated by the Authority in accordance with Section 42B (1) of the Act as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year;

<u>(6) Valuation Bands</u>	£ (to 6 decimals)	£ (rounded to 2 decimals)
A	35.910634	35.91
B	41.895739	41.90
C	47.880845	47.88
D	53.865950	53.87
E	65.836162	65.84
F	77.806373	77.81
G	89.776584	89.78
H	107.731901	107.73

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (5)(iv) above by the number which in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Authority in accordance with Section 47(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands;

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(7) Resultant precepts:

	£
Birmingham City Council	12,412,439
Coventry City Council	3,943,041
Dudley MBC	4,529,463
Sandwell MBC	3,602,253
Solihull MBC	3,836,818
Walsall MBC	3,314,012
Wolverhampton City Council	<u>3,071,974</u>
Total	<u>34,710,000</u>

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (5)(iv) above by the appropriate tax base at (4) above in accordance with section 48(2) of the Act, as the amount of precept payable by each constituent District Council;

(8) that the precept for each District Council as calculated at (7) above be issued in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Councillors Hogarth and Sealey requested that their names be recorded as having voted against the above decision in so much as it related to an increase of the precepts to the constituent District Councils.

5/14 **Monitoring of Finances**

The Authority noted a report on the monitoring of finances to the end of January, 2014, which included revenue expenditure and the capital programme.

6/14 **2014/2015 Property Asset Management Plan**

The Authority considered the proposed 2014/15 Property Asset Management Plan. Considerable work had taken place over the last twelve months to assess the appropriateness of existing property assets and to consider where any future investment should be directed.

In order to demonstrate the effective use of resources, it was necessary to undertake a fundamental review of property assets which would also be flexible enough to respond to organisational changes. The Plan involved input from all the key West Midlands Fire Service stakeholders and reflected the property and property related priorities over the next five year period.

Approval was now sought to the 2014/15 Property Asset Management Plan which would ensure the effective use of land and buildings.

Members noted that individual business cases for certain locations would be reported for the approval of the Authority as mentioned in Minute No. 3/14 above. The Chief Fire Officer, as a member of the Ambulance Trust undertook to follow up a member's concerns as to why there had been no request for dual use of fire facilities in the Solihull area.

Resolved that the 2014/2015 Property Asset Management Plan, as now submitted, be approved.

7/14 **Pay Policy Statement 2014-2015**

Approval was sought to the Pay Policy Statement for the 2014/15 financial year setting out the Authority's policies relating to the remuneration of its Chief Officers.

Resolved that the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2014/15, as now submitted, be approved.

8/14 **Proposed Vehicle Replacement Programme 2013 to 2015**

Approval was sought to proceed with the proposed Brigade Vehicle Replacement Programme (VRP) for the financial year 2013/14, following a review of the ongoing VRP.

Due to current financial constraints and the Brigades' requirement to review the type and size of appliance used for delivering the front line response under the Building upon Success programme, the Vehicle Replacement Plan for Pump Rescue Ladders (PRLs) was three years behind schedule, although the impact of this had been offset to some extent by the introduction of Brigade Response Vehicles. It was therefore proposed to procure 7 PRLs in the 2015/16 and 2016/17 financial years.

Currently, there was a total of 4 frontline and 2 reserve aerial appliance vehicles. The current programme provided for one aerial appliance to be replaced during 2015/16.

The ancillary fleet of vehicles was currently 122 vehicles and 21 specialised trailers.

The option of leasing vehicles would continue to be explored. When compared with the current method of procuring vehicles via the current framework agreement, the whole life costs of leasing were found to be more expensive.

Members commented on the differing costs for the supply of pool cars and were informed that the figures quoted were only estimates at this stage, but would be the most competitive price when procured. The costs did vary dependent on the uses for which the vehicles were intended. The specifications of these pool cars would be circulated to members.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Brigade Vehicle Replacement Programme for 2014/15 to 2016/17, as now submitted, be approved;
- (2) that the intention to procure a range of vehicles identified in the Vehicle Replacement Programme using the Office of Government Commerce (OGC), Open EU tenders and other approved Consortia routes that represent value for money to the Authority, be noted.

9/14 **Naming of the New Fire Station Following the Merger of Halesowen and Cradley Heath Fire Stations**

The Authority was informed that an extensive engagement exercise, with schools from Halesowen and Cradley Heath areas, had been undertaken to help choose a name for the new fire station which replaced the former Halesowen and Cradley Heath Fire Stations. In addition to options for the new name the competition also included pictures and poems about what the fire service meant to the pupils.

The chosen winners would be invited to attend the official opening ceremony of the Fire Station which was likely to be September or October, 2014.

Three name options had been considered and it was reported that the Municipal Buildings, which previously occupied the site, would be commemorated within the new Fire Station.

Resolved that the new fire station in Cradley Heath be named the Haden Cross Community Fire Station.

10/14 **Minutes of the Audit Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 January, 2014, were received.

11/14 **Minutes of the Executive Committee**

The minutes of the meetings held on 9 December, 2013 and 20 January, 2014, were received.

12/14 **Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee**

The minutes of the meetings held on 9 December, 2013 and 20 January, 2014 were received.

13/14 **Notes of the Policy Planning Forum**

The notes of the meetings held on 9 December, 2013 and 20 January, 2014, were received.

14/14 **Exclusion of the Public**

Resolved that the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

15/14 **Planned Procurement Exercises for 2014/15**

Approval was sought to a number of planned tender exercises for goods and services during 2014/15, in accordance with Procurement Standing Orders.

With regard to the proposals for boiler replacements it was requested that officers take into account Birmingham City Council's investigations concerning bio-mass boilers before the contract commenced.

Resolved that the following tender exercises for the provision of goods and services to West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority during 2014/15 be proceeded with:

- (i) Laundry;
- (ii) Thermal Image Cameras;
- (iii) Boiler Replacement;
- (iv) External Lighting Replacement;
- (v) Roofing Repairs/Replacement;
- (vi) Replacement Doors and Windows;
- (vii) Resurfacing of Drill Yards;
- (viii) Heating and Ventilation Maintenance;
- (ix) Office Supplies;
- (x) Upgrade of Pension System;
- (xi) BA Set and Ancillary Equipment Servicing;

- (xii) Small Tools;
- (xiii) Leading Excellence Programme;
- (xiv) Wide Area Network;
- (xv) IT Hardware Refresh;
- (xvi) Station Vans;
- (xvii) Remotely Operated Aerial System;
- (xviii) Works Required for the Training Asset Strategy;
- (xix) Construction of Training at Height Facilities at Aldridge and Binley Fire Stations.

16/14 **Award of Solar Panel Contract**

Further to Minute No. 75/13 (16 September, 2013), the Authority received a further report on the environmental and financial benefits of the award of installing solar panels at Ward End, Sutton Coldfield, Binley and Billesley Fire Stations. The installation costs and estimated annual income arising from the proposed contract were reported based on the Feed in Tariff prices of electricity and energy produced for the quarter commencing 1 April 2014. The installation of solar systems at these locations would produce an estimated 70,000 KWp of electricity per annum and reduce the Service's carbon footprint by 36kg of CO2 per annum.

The member who had requested this further report continued to have issues with regard to the proposals.

Resolved that the award of the contract for the supply and installation of solar panels to SSE Contracting Limited be approved subject to further discussions on the proposals between the member and the Director of Resources.

(Meeting ended at 12.05 pm)

Contact Officer: Rosemary Jones Democratic Services Unit Sandwell MBC 0121-569-3896
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