

Minutes of the Executive Committee

19 December, 2012, at 10.00am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Edwards (Chair);
Councillor Idrees (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Aston, Clinton, Davies, Davis, Finnegan
and Foster, and O'Neill.

Apology: Councillor Douglas-Maul.

26/12 **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

Resolved that the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting. This is to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 relating to any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under the authority and in relation to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, (including the authority holding that information).

27/12 **Brigade Response Vehicles**

Approval was sought to the expansion of the current trial of Brigade Response Vehicles (BRVs).

The trial aimed to analyse the effectiveness of the Brigade's current vehicle fleet and make recommendations for improvements to ensure that WMFS had the most versatile fleet to enable it to assign a proportionate response to any incident and ensure that Pump Rescue Ladders (PRLs) (Fire Engines) were protected for higher risk and more resource intensive incidents.

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Expanding the trial would enable larger scale testing and the maximisation of the data and evidence gathered to allow the Service to procure vehicles in a timely fashion. It would also allow effective management of the continual reduction in staffing levels due to a falling establishment through natural wastage. It was noted that there had been a recent expected spike in the number of leavers in the last three months and so it was important that different crewing models were considered as soon as possible. The Chief Fire Officer reassured members however that, despite this spike, he was confident that forecasts on the number of leavers remained reliable.

It was proposed to purchase a further five BRVs which would replace second Pump PRLs at the most appropriate locations based upon risk analysis and evidence based assessment, and would provide additional capacity as part of the reserve fleet.

The Committee noted the financial implications of the proposal and the proposed procurement route.

Members expressed concern about the ability to provide an efficient fire service in the future given the reduced staffing levels coupled with the freeze on recruitment, and the substantial cuts the Service had already suffered, with more to come. The Chief Fire Officer reported that the Fire Minister had commissioned a review into the operational efficiency of the services delivered by fire and rescue authorities in England. The review would seek to identify ways in which savings and improvements could be made without reducing life-saving services. The Chief Fire Officer assured members that he was confident in the work that West Midlands had undertaken so far and that he would demonstrate that all other appropriate options would be considered before he was prepared to say that he could not deliver an efficient fire and rescue service to the people of West Midlands.

Resolved:-

- (1) that approval be given to the expansion of the trial of Brigade Response Vehicles to enable larger scale testing and the maximisation of the data and evidence gathered to support the effective management of the Service and of the continual reduction in staffing levels;

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- (2) that approval be given to the procurement of five Toyota Hilux 'Invincibles', to be utilised as Brigade Response Vehicles as to support resolution (1) above.

(The meeting ended at 10.47am.)

*Contact Officer: Stephnie Hancock
Democratic Services Unit
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
0121 569 3189*