

<p>Minutes of the West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence Authority</p>

27th September, 2004 at 11.00 a.m.
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Hogarth (Vice-Chair) – in the Chair;
Councillors Afzal, Birbeck, Bowen, G. Davies, S. Davis,
Foster, Haque, Howard, Idrees, Jackson, Kazi,
Lawrence, Matchett, Mulhall, Perry, Rogers, Ryder,
Singh, Underhill and Ward.

Apologies: Councillors Eustace and Hinton.

57/04 **Chair's Announcements**

Induction Training for Members

The Chair reminded Members that an induction session would take place on 1st October, 2004 which would comprise visits to the Training Centre and Walsall Fire Station.

Policy Planning Forum

The Chair emphasised to members the importance of attending the next meeting of the Policy Planning Forum to be held on 25th October, 2004, which would include a further briefing on the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan for 2005/06.

Corporate Risk Management Seminar

Members were also invited to attend a Corporate Risk Management Seminar to be held on 12th October, 2004.

58/04 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 26th July, 2004 be confirmed as a correct record.

59/04 **Update on the Industrial Dispute over Fire Service Pay and Conditions**

Members were informed that agreement had been reached with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) in June 2003 on a staged pay award subject to

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satisfactory completion of all negotiations on modernising the conditions of service for firefighters, and the means by which the benefits of modernisation would be audited.

In respect of the NJC Conditions of Service (the Grey Book), agreement was subsequently reached on all matters with the exception of stand-down time, and part of the staged pay award was released. Protracted negotiations continued on the issue of stand-down time, which was finally settled on 26th August, 2004, with the agreement that between the hours of 7 am and midnight on public holidays, staff would be expected to undertake a full range of duties that arise from the Integrated Risk Management Plan. Stages 2 and 3 of the pay award had accordingly been released, and the immediate application of the Grey Book agreed.

Local negotiations would now take place on new disciplinary procedures and rank to role guidance.

The Chief Fire Officer recognised that throughout a difficult period for industrial relations, West Midlands firefighters had continued to deliver a first class service, and this would be maintained in the future. Members expressed satisfaction that the dispute had been settled, and looked forward to a positive continuing dialogue with the FBU.

60/04 **Provision of Performance Indicator Data to Members**

The Authority was reminded that performance indicator data had previously been reported to the Best Value Performance Review Committee, which had at the Annual Meeting on 26th July, 2004 been replaced by the concept of a Lead Member responsible for performance management. The Lead Member for Performance Management had asked officers to suggest a revised method of reporting data to Members that met a number of conditions: made it readily available to members; was easily understood and based on exception and general reporting; was timely but not time-consuming; allowed Members the opportunity to request specific analysis; and allowed the Lead Member to use task and finish groups to examine specific issues.

It was therefore proposed to:

- Produce bi-monthly reports to the Executive Committee identifying areas on target, near to target, and areas in need of improvement;
- Post these reports on the web site for access by any Member and provide a contact point for any queries, to enable any

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issues to be raised with the Lead Member;

- Co-ordinate task and finish groups through the Director of Administration;
- Report back to the Authority in April 2005 on the effectiveness of this process.

Resolved that the revised method of providing performance indicator data to the Authority be approved.

61/04 **Reporting of Outcomes against Action Plan Objectives**

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the Lead Member for Performance Management had asked officers to produce a report setting out progress against the Authority's approved Action Plans.

It was proposed that:

- At the commencement of each financial year, the Executive Committee receive an overview report on the corporate planning process for the year, including confirmation by the Performance and Planning Department that all Action Plans had been received;
- A quarterly exception report is submitted to the Executive Committee setting out progress against all the objectives approved by the Authority in the current year's Business and Best Value Performance Plan;
- Either independently or responding to issues raised by Members, the Lead Member for Performance Management should call for the instigation of task and finish groups in respect of any area where outcomes are believed to be falling short of the expectations of the objectives; and
- These reports be posted on the web site for access by any Member and provide a contact point for any queries, to enable issues to be raised with the Lead Member.

Resolved that the revised method of reporting of the outcomes contained in Authority-approved Action Plans be approved.

62/04 **Birmingham City Council – Partnership Working**

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence Authority was a member of the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership. The other four members of the Partnership were Birmingham City Council, West Midlands Police, Heart of Birmingham

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Primary Care Trust and the West Midlands Probation Service. The Authority's contribution to the Partnership was the attainment of fire reduction targets on which Performance Grant Award was calculated.

Partnership activity was to be delivered through a Community Partnership Hub and it was proposed to advertise secondments to two senior positions in the Hub. Birmingham City Council was seeking to share both the benefits and the risk associated with the secondment of staff to the Community Safety Partnership Hub amongst the Partnership's constituent members. Specifically, partners were asked to give a written assurance that should the level of funding of the Partnership reduce and necessitate staff redundancies, any costs would be shared between the five members of the Partnership. Support for the request would enable the release of £5m to 'Clean and Safe' activities in the City, which included approximately £1.4m for specific fire reduction work.

A further report would be submitted to the Executive Committee on the extent of the Authority's liability in respect of potential redundancy payments once the secondments were finalised.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Authority supports the request from Birmingham City Council's Chief Executive Officer that the benefits and risks of the City's Community Partnership Hub are shared between Birmingham City Council, West Midlands Police, Heart of Birmingham Primary Care Trust, West Midlands Probation Service and the West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence Authority;
- (2) that the Authority notes the possibility of incurring an unspecified proportion of potential redundancy costs in respect of staff seconded to the Community Safety Partnership Hub in the event of a reduction in funding of the Partnership; and
- (3) that the Authority approves the signing of the agreement proposed by the Chief Executive Officer of Birmingham City Council.

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63/04 **Monitoring of Finances**

The Authority received a report on the monitoring of finances during 2004/05

64/04 **Institution of Legal Proceedings**

The Authority was informed that, after consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, legal proceedings had been instituted in respect of a number of premises for failure to comply with the Explosives Act, 1975.

65/04 **Minutes of the Executive Committee**

The minutes of the meetings held on 9th August, 26th August and 13th September, 2004 were noted.

66/04 **Notes of the Policy Planning Forum**

The notes of the meeting held on 13th September, 2004 were received.

67/04 **West Midlands Regional Management Board**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30th July, 2004 were submitted.

Resolved that the acts, proceedings and recommendations of the West Midlands Regional Management Board, as set out in the minutes, be approved and adopted.

68/04 **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

Resolved that the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 relating to particular employees.

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69/04 **Supply Chain Modernisation**

The Authority considered a report proposing the dis-establishment of the Brigade's current procurement structure and the establishment of a revised structure.

Changes in the structure were proposed following a review of procurement functions in the light of recommendations from the Audit Commission, recent Best Value reviews and the draft National Procurement Strategy recently published by Government. The restructuring would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of procurement, and the proposals were consistent with best practice in many other medium to large scale businesses.

The proposals would result in a new departmental structure being in place by December, 2006, with full year savings realised during 2007/08. The new structure would result in a reduction in establishment from 30.5 to 22 posts overall.

Discussions had taken place with trades unions, and the outcome of negotiations was reported.

If approved, further reports would be submitted on progress with implementation of the review at identified stages of development.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the current structure of the Brigade's Procurement, Maintenance and Supply Section be disestablished and the revised supply chain structure as set out in the report be approved for implementation on a phased basis;
- (2) that the timescales and stage assessments contained in Appendix C of the report be noted.

(Meeting ended at 11.50 a.m.)

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