

<p>Minutes of the Executive Committee</p>
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4th January, 2005 at 10.00 am
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Hinton (Chair);
Councillor Hogarth (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Eustace, Howard, Kazi, Lawrence and
Underhill.

Observer: Councillor Ward.

1/05 **Asian Tsunami Disaster**

The Chair referred to the recent tsunami disaster in Asia that had resulted in the loss of approximately 150,000 lives.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Community Protection reported that the Brigade's Disaster Team was on standby to assist with reconstruction and restoration of services and any other assistance required in the areas affected. Brigade staff were also involved in fundraising efforts, which would be donated through the international Disasters Emergency Committee.

The Committee acknowledged the efforts of the West Midlands Firefighters who had provided rescue assistance whilst holidaying in the areas affected at the time the disaster struck.

Members and Officers stood in silent tribute as a token of respect to the memory of the thousands of people who had lost their lives as a result of the disaster.

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2/05

Community Protection Department – Establishment Changes in Administrative Support

Approval was sought for the establishment of a new post of Business Process, Quality Control and Administration Manager within the Community Protection (CP) Department and the disestablishment of the current posts of Administrative Officer and Clerical Officer (part-time) at Aston Fire Safety Centre.

The Community Protection Department performed a crucial role in the development and delivery of the Authority's approach to integrated risk management and implementation of the modernisation agenda. Due to its size and the nature of the work, it was essential that business processes and quality control systems were in place and that the department had effective administrative and clerical support arrangements.

The establishment of the new post would complement changes that had recently been implemented to the department's action planning processes and other structural changes proposed. The changes were intended to ensure that the department's responsibilities in respect of service delivery were discharged effectively and efficiently.

The proposed post of Business Process, Quality Control and Administration Manager had been evaluated at Grade 15. Taking into consideration the disestablishment of the post of Administrative Officer (Grade 11) and the part-time Clerical Officer, the net cost to the Authority was approximately £2,000 per annum, which would be met from within existing budgets.

Resolved that approval be given to establish a post of Business Process, Quality Control and Administrative Manager (Grade 15) within the Community Protection Department, and the disestablishment of the existing posts of Administrative Officer and Clerical Officer (part-time) at Aston Fire Safety Centre.

3/05

Consultation on Proposed Changes to Existing Firefighters' Pensions Scheme and Proposed New Firefighters' Pension Scheme

It was reported that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) had published two consultation documents on its proposals for a new Firefighters' Pension Scheme and proposals for amendments to the current scheme.

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The Committee was now asked to approve the Authority's response to the ODPM.

Members welcomed the proposals but raised concerns regarding the costs to the Authority in relation to spouses pensions and the definition of unmarried partners, and approval of applications for early retirement. The Chief Fire Officer undertook to make the necessary amendments to the response documents to address Members' concerns.

Resolved that the Authority's response to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's consultation papers on proposals for a new firefighters' pension scheme and amendments to the existing scheme be approved, as now amended.

4/05 **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 Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as indicated below:-

Minute No. 5/05 relates to particular employees;

Minute Nos. 6/05 and 7/05 relate to the identity of a tenderer for the supply of goods or services;

Minute No. 8/05 relates to negotiation or consultation on labour relations matters and disclosure would be likely to prejudice those negotiations.

5/05 **Future of the Workplace Nursery**

Further to Minute No. 17/04, the Committee received an update on the , of the workplace nursery.

Following a review of the facility in 2003, the Committee had agreed to amend the staffing structure and increase fees with effect from 1st May, 2004. It was envisaged that these changes would enable the nursery to be self-funding (assuming full capacity) without the need for a subsidy from the Authority. It was also agreed that partnership opportunities in childcare would be taken up wherever possible.

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However, since the implementation of the changes, no partnering opportunities had been identified and the facility still required a significant subsidy to operate due to its under-occupation. In addition, the existing Head of Nursery had obtained employment elsewhere and was due to leave the Authority in January 2005.

Due to its location and capacity the nursery was only available to a limited number of staff and on any one day was occupied by between 6 and 12 children, out of a total of 22 available places.

In view of all of these factors it the phased closure of the workplace nursery was recommended.

It was proposed to introduce the Government's new initiative on childcare vouchers within the Authority, which would benefit both employers and employees. Employees would be able to purchase childcare vouchers and receive them as part of their salary without paying tax or National Insurance (NI) contributions on their value. In turn, the employer would not have to pay NI contributions on their value.

Members welcomed the proposals as the most sensible course of action, given that previous efforts to retain the facility had been unsuccessful.

Resolved that approval be given to the phased closure of the workplace nursery by 31st March, 2005 and the introduction of Childcare Vouchers.

6/05

Renewal of Roof Coverings at Ladywood Community Fire Station

Further to Minute No. 118/04 the Committee considered a report on tenders for the renewal of roof coverings at Ladywood Community Fire Station.

The lowest tender received had exceeded the allocated budget for the project by £10,000. Funding had now been identified within existing budgets to meet the shortfall and approval was now sought to award the contract to the lowest tenderer.

The tender submitted by General Asphalt Co Ltd was considered to represent best value for money for the Authority.

Resolved:-

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- (1) that subject to the preparation of a formal contract by the Clerk, the acceptance of the tender submitted by General Asphalt Co Ltd in the sum of £130,560.00, being the lowest received, be affirmed;
- (2) that the budget shortfall of £10,000 be met from within existing budgets.

7/05

Tenders for Refurbishment Works at Bloxwich Fire Station

The Committee opened five tenders received for the above scheme in the following amounts:-

£148,000.00;
£158,117.00;
£158,375.00;
£176,948.00;
£194,291.00.

The estimated cost of the work was £150,000.00

Resolved that subject to:-

- (a) the checking of the tender;
- (b) the preparation of a formal contract by the Clerk;
- (c) any necessary comments from the Government Departments concerned;

the tender submitted by Fellows and Jones (Builders) Limited, in the sum of £148,000.00, being the lowest received, be accepted.

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8/05

Duty Systems and Shift Patterns to Support the Integrated Risk Management Plan

Approval was sought to commence formal consultation with the workforce and representative bodies on two proposed new duty systems and shift patterns to meet the requirements of the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) for 2005/2006.

In April 2004/2005 the Fire Authority introduced its first IRMP based upon the concept of moving operational personnel into a strategic reserve to increase its community fire safety activity and time spent on training. The second IRMP, which was currently out for public consultation, compared fluctuations in emergency demand between different hours of the day and the hours the strategic reserve could feasibly provide a service. It proposed to match fire appliance availability to emergency demand, which would reduce the need to have the same number of fire appliances available throughout the day and accordingly, the number of Firefighters required on duty.

Having considered the various options, two feasible shift patterns were proposed. The advantages and disadvantages of each option were reported.

A further report would be submitted on the outcome of the consultation process and the detailed financial implications.

Resolved that approval be given to enter into formal consultation with the workforce and representative bodies on the two proposed new duty systems and shift patterns as now submitted, in order to meet the requirements of the IRMP for 2005/2006.

(Meeting ended at 11.19 am)

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