

## **Minutes of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority**

**25<sup>th</sup> September, 2006, at 11.00 a.m.**  
**at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham**

**Present:** Councillor Hinton (Chair);  
Councillor Hogarth (Vice-Chair);  
Councillors Bowen, G Davies, S Davis, Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Foster, Howard, Hussain, Idrees, Jackson, Jones, Mulhall, Pitt, Rogers, Ross, Ryder, Singh, Spence, Stevenson, Tagger, and Ward;  
Mr Topliss.

**Apologies:** Councillors Alden, Birbeck, Coughlan and Gazey.

### **52/06 Chair's Announcements**

The Chair reported that Angela Smith, Minister for the Fire Service, would be visiting the Fallings Park Fire Station on Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2006 for a presentation on the work of the West Midlands Regional Management Board, before going on to the Wolverhampton Business Park to view progress on the building of the new Regional Control Centre.

He reminded Members that the annual Parliamentary visit was to take place on 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2006, and that Members would be accompanied on this occasion for the first time by other West Midlands Regional Fire Authority Chairs and their Chief Fire Officers.

The Chair also outlined his recent official engagements including a visit to Bridgnorth Fire Station; and attendance at the launch of the Young Baggies at the West Bromwich Albion Football Ground, a Borough Commanders' meeting and the Annual Firefighters' Memorial Service in London.

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**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2006 be confirmed as a correct record.

54/06     **Audit Memorandum – Report to those charged with governance**

The Authority noted an Audit Memorandum prepared by its external auditors, KPMG, setting out the key findings from the audit work carried out for the 2005/06 year. A representative of KPMG was present at the meeting to present the report. A final report would be submitted by KPMG once the audit work was complete.

55/06     **Local Government Management Representations 2005/06**

The Authority noted the content of the Local Government Management Representation 2005/06 to be submitted to the Authority's external auditors, KPMG.

56/06     **Corporate Board Responsibilities**

The Authority considered a report setting out proposals for a revised corporate structure.

In response to issues identified by the recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment, the West Midlands Local Government Association (WMLGA) review of the people and performance management functions of the Authority, and the recent self-assessment of Operational Service Delivery, the Executive Committee had approved (Minute No 37/06) an interim management structure and authorised the appointment of a non-uniformed Director of Human Resources, and the interim appointment of an Assistant Chief Fire Officer to manage the nine Borough Commanders.

Proposals were now submitted for a revision of the senior management structure as indicated in Appendix 1 hereto.

Under the new proposals, the current Director (Administration)

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would take on the role of Director (Corporate Planning and Support) including responsibility for Integrated Risk Management, planning, data analysis and risk control.

The Director of Technical Services would relinquish responsibility for procurement in order to concentrate on the following major change projects: the relocation of Headquarters; the integration of ICT systems; and work in relation to Regional Fire Control; together with his existing responsibilities.

The Finance Officer would take on responsibility for procurement and be re-designated Head of Finance and Procurement.

The Director Operations would manage staff involved in delivering services to communities including risk reduction activity. The Director (Operations Support) would manage the functions currently carried out by the Community Protection Department.

The Head of Human Resources (see Minute No. 37/06 of the Executive Committee) would take back responsibility for training and development as well as managing the strategic human resources function.

Under the new arrangements responsibility for best value reviews would transfer to the Performance and Planning Department, to be renamed the Performance Improvement Department, bringing all internal audit and review functions together under a Senior Divisional Officer reporting direct to the Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

All third tier posts would also report direct to the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, who would in turn report to the Chief Fire Officer.

It was proposed to implement these changes in the period up to January 2007.

In furtherance of Minute No. 37/06 of the Executive Committee, a professional recruitment agency had been engaged to assist with the appointment of the Head of Human Resources, and the post was due to be advertised shortly. Shortlisting and

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interviews would be conducted by the Appointments Committee in accordance with the Authority's Standing Orders.

The financial implications of the proposals would be taken into account in the Authority's budget setting process.

The Lead Member for Equality and Diversity asked for clarification on where responsibility for equality and diversity matters would lie within the Corporate Board. The Chief Fire Officer undertook to keep responsibility for equality and diversity matters within his own remit for the foreseeable future. There would be further discussion between the Lead Member for Equality and Diversity and the Chief Fire Officer on this matter.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that the revised senior management structure as set out in Appendix 1 be approved;
- (2) that arrangements be made for the Appointments Committee to shortlist and make appointments as necessary to Assistant Chief Fire Officer posts and to the post of Head of Human Resources in accordance with its terms of reference.

**57/06     Race Equality Scheme**

The Authority considered a revised Race Equality Scheme for the period 2006/09. The scheme had been drawn up in accordance with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000 following wide consultation internally and with external stakeholders. Responses from the consultation process were submitted for information.

Progress on the implementation of the action plans set out in the scheme would be monitored by the Lead Member for Equality and Diversity.

**Resolved** that the Race Equality Scheme as now submitted be approved.

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58/06    **Consultation Response to the Department for Communities and Local Government on the revocation of the Devon FRA Combination Scheme to allow for the combination of Devon and Somerset FRAs**

The Authority considered a draft response to the Department for Communities and Local Government with regard to a consultation on the proposed revocation of the Devon FRA Combination Scheme to allow for the combination of Devon and Somerset FRAs.

**Resolved** that the proposed consultation response be approved.

59/06    **Health and Safety Performance 2005/06**

The Authority noted a report on health and safety performance of the Brigade in 2005/06. The total number of injuries had fallen by 55% over the past 15 years, and the more serious injuries reportable to the Health and Safety Executive had fallen by 78% over the same period. Members were pleased to note the considerable achievement of the Brigade in bringing about this significant fall in the number of injuries sustained.

60/06    **Monitoring of Finances**

The Authority received a report on the monitoring of finances during 2005/06.

61/06    **Minutes of the Executive Committee**

The minutes of the meetings held on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> July, and 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2006 were received.

With regard to Minute No. 35/06 (New Fire Service Headquarters) Members were informed that work was progressing on the acquisition of a site for the new Headquarters, and that the procurement process inviting expressions of interest for the provision of the new Headquarters was well advanced, with tenders due for return in

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November, 2006.

62/06    **Notes of the Policy Planning Forum**

The notes of the meetings held on 24<sup>th</sup> July and 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2006 were received, subject to the addition of the name of Councillor Hogarth to the list of apologies for the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2006.

63/06    **Minutes of the West Midlands Regional Management Board**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> July, 2006 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.

64/06    **West Midlands Regional Management Board - Annual Report 2005/06**

The Authority received the annual report of the West Midlands Regional Management Board for 2005/06.

65/06    **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 premises at 191 – 193 Hagley Road, Edgbaston for failure to comply with the Manufacture and Storage of Explosives Regulations 2005.

66/06    **Outstanding Business**

The Authority received an update on items of business that were outstanding and an indication of when the items would be coming forward for consideration.

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67/06     **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 relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

68/06     **Relocation of Fire Control**

The Authority was reminded that the Executive Committee had approved (Minute No. 10/06) the relocation of Fire Control from the existing Fire Service Headquarters to Walsall Fire Station, in preparation for the vacation of the Headquarters site.

Investigations had revealed that the estimated cost of building works would be significantly exceeded if the proposal were to proceed because the works would encroach on encapsulated asbestos, and a dedicated electricity supply would be needed. Other options previously considered had been revisited, and it was now recommended that Fire Control be co-located to the new Fire Service Headquarters as the most cost effective solution. The facility could also be used to undertake 'out of scope' activities that would not be provided by the Regional Control Centre.

The estimated cost of the revised proposals could be met from existing budgets.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that the option to relocate Fire Control to Walsall Fire Station be discontinued due to the cost of additional building and electrical works required at the site; and
- (2) that Fire Control be co-located at the new Fire Service Headquarters.

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69/06     **Insurance Renewal 2006 and Proposal for Alternative Risk Financing**

The Authority received details of the costs of renewal of the insurance arrangements to apply from 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2006.

Details were also submitted of a feasibility study carried out on behalf of 20 Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs), including this Authority, into the possibility of establishing an Alternative Risk Transfer (ART) vehicle. The study suggested that 15% savings could be achieved on the existing level of premiums if insurances were placed with a Mutual Insurance Company domiciled in the United Kingdom and regulated by the Financial Services Authority. The company could be incorporated by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2007, with participating FRAs transferring their insurance policies to the company as and when existing arrangements expired.

If the Authority joined the company the immediate cost would be approximately £15,000, together with a possible contribution towards capitalization of approximately £180,000 at some time in the future. Suitable break clauses could be included in insurance agreements for 2006/07 to minimize any costs incurred if it was decided to pursue the ART.

**Resolved:-**

- (1)     that the Authority's insurance arrangements for the year commencing 1st October, 2006 be made with insurers indicated in the Appendix to the report now submitted;
- (2)     that a further report on the ART process be submitted in due course, following a presentation to the Policy Planning Forum.



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(Meeting ended at 12.30 pm)

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**APPENDIX**

**PROPOSED STRUCTURE**

