

Minutes of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

22nd September 2008, at 11.00 am
at the Fire Service Headquarters, 99 Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Howard (Chairman);
Councillor Ward (Vice-Chairman);
Councillors Alden, Ali Khan, Chambers, Clinton,
Delaney, Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Gazey, Hinton,
Howard, Idrees, Jones, Mulhall, O'Neill, Ryder, S
Davis, Singh, Spence, Stevenson, Sutton, Tagger,
Turner, and Ward.
Mr Ager and Mr Topliss.

Apologies: Councillors G Davies, Robinson and Skinner.

45/08 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman welcomed Members to their first meeting of the full Authority at the new headquarters.

The Authority noted the following announcements:-

- The Road Kill Conference was taking place at the Brigade Training Centre, Smethwick, on 21st October 2008.
- The Fire Service Band was holding a concert at Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, on 6th December 2008 at 7.30pm.
- A Carol Concert was being held at St Martin's Church in the Bullring, Birmingham, on 7th December 2008 at 4.30pm.
- A visit to Handsworth Community Fire Station was taking place on 23rd September 2008 for new Members.
- Visits to the Regional Control Centre were taking place on 2nd October and 25th November 2008.
- The annual Parliamentary visit was taking place on 10th December 2008, departing from headquarters at 8.00am.

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The Chairman was of the opinion that the matter referred to at Minute No. 56/08 should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with the provisions set out in the Authority's Procedural Standing Orders, Standing Order 6 (1) (m).

46/08 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd June 2008 be confirmed as a correct record.

47/08 **External Audit: Audit Memorandum – Report to those charged with governance**

Officers from the Audit Commission presented to the Authority the report to those charged with governance.

The report indicated that the Audit Commission had concluded that the Authority had made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ending 31st March 2008. The Audit Commission proposed to issue an unqualified audit opinion, subject to the satisfactory outcome of the pending valuation of surplus assets, in particular the now unused fire fighter accommodation.

The Authority noted the contents of the draft management representation letter that would be signed by the Chairman and the Treasurer on behalf of the Authority.

48/08 **Monitoring of Finances**

The Authority received a report on the monitoring of finances for the current financial year to August 2008.

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49/08 **Institution of Legal Proceedings**

The Authority was informed that, after consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, legal proceedings had been instituted in respect of Zebs Supermarket, 610 Yardley Wood Road, Birmingham and premises at 8 Linkwood Close, Moseley, Birmingham, for failure to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

50/08 **Minutes of the Executive Committee**

The minutes of the meetings held on 7th and 28th July and 8th September 2008, were received.

51/08 **Notes of the Policy Planning Forum**

The notes of the meetings held on 7th and 28th July and 8th September 2008 were received.

52/08 **Minutes of the Audit Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th July 2008 were received.

53/08 **Minutes of the Standards Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st July 2008 were received.

54/08 **Minutes of the West Midlands Regional Management Board**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th July 2008 were received.

Resolved that the acts, proceedings and recommendations of the West Midlands Regional Management Board, as set out in the minutes now

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submitted, be approved and adopted.

55/08 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 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).

56/08 Update on Regional Control Centre and Local Authority Controlled Company

The Authority received an update on staffing issues, facilities management and the ongoing discussions regarding cost-apportionment in relation to the Regional Control Centre and the Local Authority Controlled Company established to manage the centre.

57/08 Replacement Respiratory Protective Equipment

Approval was sought to replace the Brigade's existing Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE), in accordance with the Annual Service Plan 2008/2009. The current RPE had been purchased in 1997 with a 10 year life expectancy. Robust maintenance programmes had extended the life of the equipment; however, terminal expiry of some of the component parts would render the equipment beyond repair from 2010.

The National Framework promoted the need for Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) to develop interoperability and resilience where possible. The RPE replacement project had therefore been based on a collaborative approach with Hereford and Worcester; Warwickshire; and Staffordshire FRSs. This collaboration provided the opportunity to make savings if all four FRSs purchased RPE from the same supplier.

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The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) had expressed the view that FRSs should, where possible, make use of the national arrangements available through the FiReBuy framework for the supply and maintenance of self-contained breathing apparatus. In order to facilitate this specific requirement a mini tendering exercise had been undertaken, using Hereford and Worcester FRS' procedures. Bids from four companies had been received and evaluated and it was recommended that the contract be awarded to Draeger Safety UK Ltd at a cost of £753,556. The Authority noted that this price was based on volume discounts of approximately £50,000, based all four FRSs procuring the same equipment.

The Authority also noted that Draeger Safety UK Ltd was not the lowest tenderer; however, the company had scored the highest in the evaluation process, which had been carried out following EU Directives and FiReBuy criteria.

Sufficient funding for the project had been set aside as part of the Authority's closedown of accounts in 2006/2007 and 2007/2008.

Resolved that, subject to:-

- (a) the preparation of a formal contract by the Clerk;
- (b) any necessary consents from the Government Departments concerned;

the tender for the replacement Respiratory Protective Equipment be awarded to Draeger Safety UK Ltd, in the sum of £753,556.

58/08 Insurance Arrangements

The Authority received details of the costs of renewal of its insurances to apply from 1st October 2008.

Members noted that the Authority was still responsible for insuring its previous headquarters building until its interest in the building

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ceased, at which point a return of premiums would be requested based on the unexpired term of insurance.

Members congratulated officers for their hard work in negotiating the premiums.

Resolved that the recommendations set out in the report with regard to the Authority's insurance arrangements for the year commencing 1st October 2008 be approved;

(Meeting ended at 12.12 pm)

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Contact Officer: Stephnie Hancock Democratic Services Unit Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 0121-569-3189</i></p>
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