

**Minutes of a Meeting of the
West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority**

15th April, 2013 at 11.00 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Edwards [Chair];
Councillor Idrees [Vice-Chair];
Councillors Aston, Singh Atwal, Auluck, Chambers,
Clinton, Davis, Delaney, Douglas-Maul, Eustace,
Finnegan, Foster, Hogarth, O'Neill, O'Reilly,
Quinnen, Sealey, Spence, Tranter, Walsh, Ward,
Wright and Young.

Apologies: Councillors Davies, Singh and Yardley.

Observer: Mr Ager.

21/13

Chair's Announcements

The Chair reported that the West Midlands Fire Service had recently won the Emergency Services sector award for Health and Safety and had been nominated by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents for entry into the Sir George Earle Trophy, a prestigious occupational health and safety award, and had finished within the top three.

The Society had reported that it was impressed with the Service's health and safety systems which were of a high standard and felt that the Service was a worthy winner of the Emergency Services sector award.

The Chair referred to the recent meeting of the Policy Planning Forum and informed members that the start times of Committee meetings were all publicised in accordance with Access to Information Regulations and as such, there was not scope to change the start time of a meeting.

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However, in future officers would be mindful of timings allocated on Policy Planning Forum presentations to avoid members having to wait long periods for their next meeting.

The Chair congratulated Councillor Foster on his recent nomination as a Conservative Parliamentary candidate for Torbay for the next General Election due to be held in May 2015.

22/13 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 18th February, 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

23/13 **The Plan 2013-2016**

Approval was sought to 'The Plan 2013-2016' which outlined the strategic direction for the Authority and set out the key priorities and strategic objectives.

The Plan defined the range of services that would be provided, the outcomes that would be achieved and the commitment to partnership working. The Community Safety Strategy, which detailed community risk analysis, had also been aligned to The Plan.

The Plan 2013-2016 also now included:-

- a joint Foreword from the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer which incorporated the key elements of the Strategic Intent Document and the Authority's priorities;
- the Service's risk based attendance matrix clearly setting out performance standards;
- an additional section on 'How We Are Changing for the Future' which replaced 'The Challenges We Face' which positively outlined the approaches the Service would use to address future changes in investment, resources and risk.

Approval was also sought to the corporate performance indicators and targets for 2013-2014 which had been determined using analysis of trends against a three year rolling average, as well as knowledge of local managers and the influence of external factors.

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The Plan and corporate performance indicators and targets would be subject to review throughout the year to ensure they were still valid and relevant and having regard to any new or emerging influences. This would ensure that targeting of resources was undertaken in the most cost effective and efficient way to deliver the key priorities and objectives of the service.

Performance against the Plan would be monitored on a regular basis by the Scrutiny Committee.

Concerns were raised that there were more people killed as a result of road traffic accidents than fires with figures continuing to rise. This included the number of cyclists being killed or seriously injured increasing by 42%. Currently, attending road traffic accidents was not a statutory duty and as such, no funding was provided by Government to carry out this function. Members and officers were accordingly requested to lobby on behalf of the Service and to approach their respective authorities and partner agencies with a view to securing resources to continue the good work of the Road Casualty Reduction Team. In addition, officers were requested to undertake work to ascertain whether early intervention work could reduce road traffic injuries/deaths.

Resolved:-

- (1) that 'The Plan 2013-2016' be approved;
- (2) that the Corporate Performance Indicators and Targets for 2013-2014 be approved;
- (3) that all members of the Authority approach their respective authorities and officers approach partner agencies in order to secure resources to continue the work of the Road Casualty Reduction Team;
- (4) that officers undertake work in order to ascertain whether any early intervention work could reduce road traffic injuries/deaths.

24/13

Community Safety Strategy 2013-2016

Approval was sought to the Authority's Community Safety Strategy 2013-2016 (also known as the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2013-2016). The Strategy contained details of the Service's risk analysis and was a key source of information in the creation of strategic resourcing plans.

The Authority had considered the draft Strategy at its meeting held on 18th February 2013. The Strategy had now been amended to include final details of the financial settlements and the Authority's budget for 2013-2014.

The Community Safety Strategy 2013-2016 would be hyperlinked into The Plan and would be maintained as an electronic format only to ensure that up to date supporting information could be provided and to reduce production costs.

Resolved that the Community Safety Strategy 2013-2016, which serves as the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan, be approved.

25/13

Shared Fire Control Facility

The Authority considered the progress made on the Shared Fire Control Project, a collaboration between the Authority and Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Fire Control solution would comprise a single site to receive 999 calls, mobilise appliances and firefighters and provide incident management and support to both Fire and Rescue Services. This site would be located at the West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters, utilising the existing fire control and would also provide a contact centre/Home Safety Check management facility.

In order to ensure smooth transition to a single facility, an interim solution was being implemented with an expected go live date of May 2013. The interim arrangement would comprise of a single Command and Control system linked between the two Services, but operated by the respective Brigades.

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On 6th February 2013, the Fire Control Project Governance Board gave consideration to proposals for the future governance arrangements for the project. The proposals included a collaborative Governance Board becoming the governing body for all strategic decisions relating to the Shared Fire Control Centre which would operate from April 2014.

The collaborative governance board would ensure that both Fire Authorities had equity in decision making and would represent their respective interests and expectations. The shared governance approach would focus on innovation and best practice, sharing investment costs and service improvement strategies.

To ensure a legally binding contract between the two Fire Authorities, it was proposed to enter into a Service Level Agreement.

The Board explored further the future opportunities for joint working and determined that it would be appropriate for the new Governance Board to act as a conduit to further collaborative working between both Fire Authorities.

Various options for the employment of personnel within the Shared Fire Control Centre had been explored and it was proposed that, as the single site option was now proposed, the most appropriate approach would be for this Authority to become the employing body for staff in the Shared Fire Control Centre.

Currently, the Fire Control Project Governance Board had authority to explore and investigate only; however the new collaborative Governance Board would require delegated powers with effect from April 2014.

In the interim, the progress of the project through the current Project Governance Board would continue including reporting back to respective Authorities to ratify key decisions.

The new Governance Board would be made up of the Chief Fire Officer, Fire Authority Chair, three Elected Members and a legal advisor from each authority. The Governance Board, the new Governance Board would meet on a quarterly basis with the option to hold “emergency meetings” as required.

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The Chair, on behalf of the Authority, thanked the Assistant Chief Fire Officer and his Team for all of their hard work in delivering a good project.

Resolved that the following decisions of the Fire Control Project Governance Board be ratified:-

- (1) that the single Shared Fire Control facility be located at the West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters;
- (2) that a new collaborative Governance Board become the overarching strategic board for the Shared Fire Control Centre with effect from April 2014;
- (3) that a Service Level Agreement be the legal mechanism for the contractual arrangements between the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority and the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority and that a further report signing off the Service Level Agreement be submitted to the Authority;
- (4) that the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority becomes the employing body for all personnel working within the Shared Fire Control Centre.

26/13

Revised Pay Policy Statement 2013/2014

Approval was sought to amend the Pay Policy Statement 2013/2014 in order to comply with new guidance issued to all local authorities by the Right Honorable Eric Pickles MP which sought to reflect lessons learnt from the experience last year.

The amendment required any decisions on pay, remuneration or severance packages of Chief Officer roles and/or packages of £100,000 or more to be submitted to the Authority.

Resolved that the revised amendment to the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2013/2014, be approved.

27/13

Honoraria

The Authority received details of the process for the payment of honoraria, the scale of payments made in 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 and in order to improve transparency, proposals to inform the Chair of the Authority, for information, of all honoraria payments.

The Director of Human Resources and the Director of Resources were currently consulted before the appropriate Director gave approval to the payment of honoraria. If the Chair of the Authority or an authorising officer considered it appropriate, they could also consult with the Clerk to the Authority.

The honoraria payments made in 2011/2012 equated to £14,450 and £72,497 in 2012/2013.

Concern was raised at the increase in honoraria payments over the twelve month period. Members requested a further report to the next meeting giving a breakdown of all of the projects where honoraria payments had been made.

Resolved:-

- (1) that details on the process relating to the payments of honoraria be received;
- (2) that the scale of honoraria payments made in 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 be noted;
- (3) that in relation to the payment of future honoraria, the Chair of the Authority be informed, for information, of all authorisations for payment prior to payments being made;
- (4) that the Director of Human Resources submit a further report to the next meeting of the Authority giving a breakdown of all of the projects where honoraria payments have been made.

28/13

Result of Recent Fire Safety Prosecutions

The Chief Fire Officer reported on the following successful prosecutions which had been brought under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 against:

- The Fox Hotel Limited following a joint licensing task force inspection which identified multiple failures to comply with fire safety legislation which constituted a risk of death or serious injury to people in the hotel. The Director and Responsible Person for the limited company was sentenced to custody of eight months imprisonment, suspended for two years and fined £19,066.40 in respect of twenty three charges under the Regulations plus costs;
- 30A Hall Street, Dudley following a fire at the premises. The owner of the property was fined a total of £25,281.50 (£4,000 per offence) plus costs;
- Hylands Hotel (Cumberland Court Limited), 153-155 Warwick Road, Coventry following a fire safety inspection, subsequent to a complaint being made about the fire safety of the premises. As a result of a follow up inspection and the enforcement notice not being complied with, the company director for the limited company was fined £22,000 in accumulative penalties for the failures and received a custodial sentence of two months imprisonment, suspended for two years.

29/13

Minutes of the Standards Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th November, 2012, were received.

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30/13 **Exclusion of the Public**

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).

31/13 **Contract Awards Summary for Period 1st October 2012 – 31st March 2013**

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a list of contracts in excess of £100,000 awarded since 1st October, 2012.

32/13 **Councillor A R Ward**

The Chair, on behalf of the Authority, thanked Councillor Ward, who would be stepping down as member of the Authority in the following municipal year, for all of his work and contributions for this year and former years on the Authority. The Chair wished Councillor Ward well in his career in Sandwell.

(Meeting ended at 11.46 am)

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