

<p>Minutes of the Executive Committee</p>
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24th July, 2006 at 12 noon
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Hinton (Chair);
Councillor Hogarth (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Bowen, Eustace, Idrees, and Ward.

Observers: Councillors Douglas-Maul, Foster, Hussain, Jones,
Rogers, Ryder, Singh, Spence, Stevenson, and Tagger;
Mr Topliss.

Apology: Councillor Howard.

36/06 **Declaration of Interests**

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Brown declared a personal interest in Minute No. 37/06 below [Corporate Board Responsibilities].

37/06 **Corporate Board Responsibilities**

The Committee was informed that the West Midlands Local Government Association [WMLGA] had undertaken an independent review of the Human Resources function within the Authority, within a wider remit to look at the overall approach of the Authority to the management of people. This work had been commissioned following the 2005 Comprehensive Performance Assessment [CPA] where overall the Authority had been assessed as being a 'good performer', but two areas of the Authority, 'Performance Management' and 'Capacity People', had been assessed as level 2 [performing at only the minimum required level and performance is adequate].

The Executive Summary of the WMLGA report was presented.

The Committee was informed that the following actions had already been taken in response to the CPA findings and the WMLGA conclusions and recommendations:

Executive Committee
24th July, 2006

- ❑ The Equality and Diversity Section of the Human Resources Department had been transferred to the direct control of the Chief Fire Officer in February 2006;
- ❑ An extensive review of the current Corporate Board structure was being undertaken to identify steps that could be taken to improve further the Authority's management of performance and service delivery. The WMLGA report would feed into this review, and a broader, more detailed report would be submitted to the Authority at its meeting on 25th September, 2006;
- ❑ In June 2006 the Chief Fire Officer had changed the responsibilities of two Directors in an interim response to the WMLGA report. The Director of Performance and Planning had taken on responsibility for the Personnel and Personnel Policy and Planning Sections. The former Director Human Resources retained responsibility for Training, Development and Specialist Support.

It was now proposed to employ a non-uniformed Director of Human Resources with the appropriate competence, experience and skills to deliver the identified improvements. Until this appointment was made, the interim arrangements set out above for the management of the Human Resources function would continue. An improvement plan based on the recommendations of the WMLGA report would be put in place to start the improvement process.

It was also proposed to dis-establish the post of City of Birmingham Borough Commander, which would reduce the number of Senior Divisional Officers in the establishment from 7 to 6; and to establish a post of temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer with responsibility for managing the Authority's nine Borough Commanders, reporting direct to the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, who would retain responsibility for the Community Protection Department.

This interim structure would provide a co-ordinated, effective management structure for all of the Authority's service delivery functions under the direct control of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, allowing improvements in performance management to be implemented and thereby improving service delivery.

Representative bodies had been consulted on these proposals, and UNISON and the Fire Brigades Union had responded with broad support for the proposals.

Executive Committee
24th July, 2006

The additional costs of implementing these changes were estimated to be £40,000, which could be funded from savings accruing from staff vacancies in the current year. Any additional costs in 2007/08 would need to be taken into account in the Authority's budget setting process.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the establishment of a non-uniformed post of Director of Human Resources be approved;
- (2) that the dis-establishment of the post of City of Birmingham Borough Commander [Senior Divisional Officer] be approved;
- (3) that the establishment of a temporary post of Assistant Chief Fire Officer with responsibility for managing the nine Borough Commanders be approved;
- (4) that the interim arrangements proposed by the Chief Fire Officer in respect of Corporate Board responsibilities as set out above be endorsed;
- (5) that a further report be submitted to the Authority in September, 2006 on proposals for a review of the Corporate Board structure.

38/06 External Partnership Funding - Community Facilities at Erdington Fire Station

The Committee was informed that proposals had been drawn up to develop a former dormitory area at Erdington Fire Station to provide a Visitors Interactive Centre. The estimated cost of the scheme was £27,000 for the modification and fit-out. There would be additional costs of £21,500 for works to make the premises compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, which could be met from the Diversity Works capital allocation.

External partnership funding of £25,000 was available from the Local Delivery Group at Erdington [LDGE] to assist with the modification of the premises and fit-out of the Centre, £8,000 of which had been utilised in 2005/06 to provide an easy access toilet. The total cost of the scheme could be funded from the balance of the LDGE contribution of £17,000, £2,000 from the Erdington Fire Station devolved budget 2006/07, and

Executive Committee
24th July, 2006

the remaining £8,000 from the displaced 2005/06 diversity works budget.

It was anticipated that additional external funding would be made available by LDGE to meet the costs of providing IT facilities within the proposed Centre. If this was not forthcoming, the IT work could be funded from funds identified during the 2005/06 Closedown of Accounts.

Resolved that acceptance of the offer of £25,000 external partnership funding from LDGE to convert the former dormitory area into a Visitors Interactive Centre be approved.

39/06 Firelink Regional Road Show – Approved Duty

The Committee was informed that the national FireLink project currently being developed by the Department of Communities and Local Government [DCLG] would provide a fully integrated resilient and secure radio scheme capable of providing inter-operability for the Fire Service and other emergency services.

The National FireLink Project Team was staging a series of Regional Road Shows that Elected Members and officers were encouraged to attend. The West Midlands Regional Road Show would be taking place on 4th August, 2006 at the West Midlands Fire Service Training Centre.

Resolved that attendance by Authority Members at the Roadshow be regarded as approved duty for the purpose of payment of Members' expenses.

40/06 Replacement and Upgrading of Hydraulic Rescue Tools

The Committee considered a report seeking approval to join the South West Fire and Rescue Services [Bluelight] Framework Agreement for the purpose of acquiring hydraulic rescue tools as part of a four-year rolling programme to replace outdated equipment. It was permissible to use such an arrangement under paragraph 3.15 of the Authority's Procurement Standing Orders.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the recommendation to join the South West Fire and Rescue Services [Bluelight] Framework Agreement for the replacement and upgrading of hydraulic rescue tools be

Executive Committee
24th July, 2006

approved, and that the necessary exception to Procurement Standing Orders be granted;

- (2) that a further report be submitted in due course on the destination of hydraulic rescue tools disposed of under the four-year replacement programme.

41/06 **Progress towards Key Department and Borough Action Plan Objectives**

The Committee received a report outlining proposals to improve the format of the quarterly report on progress against key Action Plan objectives to provide a more strategic analysis highlighting strengths and areas for improvement, linking performance and corporate risk, and providing benchmarking data.

Resolved that the proposals be approved.

42/06 **General Income Write Offs**

The Committee noted that there had been no general income items written off as irrecoverable up to £1,000 for the quarter ended June 2006 and considered proposals for an alternative reporting mechanism.

Resolved that the report on general income write offs be submitted at six monthly intervals in future.

43/06 **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 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 for the following reason:

Minute No 44/06 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person [including the authority holding that information].

Executive Committee
24th July, 2006

44/06 **Provision of an Occupational Health Physician Service**

Further to Minute No. 21/06, the Committee received a report on the tenders received for the provision of an occupational health physician service. The tender documents had been evaluated, and it was recommended that the two lowest tenders be rejected. The reasons for the recommendation were outlined.

Resolved that the tender submitted by National Britannia Ltd, in the sum of £750 per session, being the third lowest received, be accepted.

(Meeting ended at 12.18 pm)

<p style="text-align:center"><i>Contact Officer: Georgina Wythes Democratic Services Unit Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 0121-566-3791</i></p>
