

<p>Minutes of the Executive Committee</p>
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25th October, 2004 at 11.30 a.m.
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

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

Observers: Councillors Birbeck, S. Davis, Foster, Howard, Idrees, Jackson, Mulhall, Pitt, Ryder, T. Singh, Wallace and Ward.

92/04 **Best Value Performance Indicators – Consultation Proposals 2005/2006**

The Committee received a report setting out a proposed response to a consultation document issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister regarding proposals to amend Best Value Performance Indicators for 2005/2006. The draft response had been prepared in consultation with the Lead Member for Performance Management.

The proposed changes would affect both the Fire Service specific indicators and the Corporate Health measures. The deadline for responses was 26th October, 2004.

Resolved that the draft response in respect of proposed changes to the Best Value Performance Indicators for 2005/2006 be approved for submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

93/04 **Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) – Outturn Data to 31st August, 2004**

The Committee noted a report informing members of the latest performance of the Brigade against the performance indicators contained in the Authority's Best Value Performance Plan for 2004/2005 for the period to 31st August, 2004.

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The Lead Member for Performance Management referred to BVPI LI 11 (the number of accidental fires in dwellings). He drew members' attention to a further breakdown of these figures by type of dwelling which showed an interesting correlation between the number of dwellings with a fire alarm and the percentage of fires confined to the room of origin.

94/04 **Consultation: Best Value for Fire and Rescue Authorities**

The Committee received a report setting out a draft response to issues put forward for consultation in Circular 28-2004 from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, regarding changes to Best Value arrangements in Fire and Rescue Authorities in the light of the forthcoming Fire Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA).

The consultation document incorporated a number of measures including:-

- A proposed improvement planning process to follow the implementation of Fire CPA;
- The role of Best Value in supporting improvement;
- Guidance on Best Value Performance Plans following CPA and reflecting a proportional approach in response to the CPA category awarded;
- Guidance on the application of Transfer Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) principles and the code of practice on workforce matters in relation to Fire and Rescue Authority contracts;
- Proposals from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for freedoms and flexibilities reflecting CPA performance; and
- The application of the Local Government Intervention Protocol to the powers to enforce the National Framework contained in Section 22 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

The deadline for responses was 26th October, 2004.

Resolved that the draft response to Circular 28-2004 be approved for submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

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95/04 **Consultation: 2005/2006 Fire and Rescue National Framework**

The Committee considered a draft response to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister with regard to the content of the proposed 2005/2006 Fire and Rescue National Framework, as requested in Circular 27-2004. The National Framework set out the expectations and commitment of Government to the Fire Service and provided a template against which modernisation and performance of Fire Authorities would be measured.

Resolved that the draft response to Circular 27-2004 be approved for submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

96/04 **Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Unit – Mobilisation Standby and Training Allowance**

The Committee was informed that the Brigade UK Fire Service Search and Rescue Team (UKFSSAR) had been set up to respond locally, regionally or nationally to incidents involving the major collapse of buildings where persons were reported to be trapped, and was one of 12 teams operating nationally.

The UKFSSAR Team had provided 24/7 operational availability since 1st April, 2004. It had been envisaged that Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate would issue guidance as to the level of remuneration to be paid to such teams. In the absence of such guidance a number of Chief Fire Officers in other Brigades had already approved payment of appropriate allowances.

Members of the Brigade UKFSSAR Team were restricted in their off-duty activities whilst on stand-by and also had to undergo additional specialist training, but currently received no recompense. It was proposed to recognise the commitment of team members by paying a standby retaining fee of £170 per month, and for non-flexible Duty System Officers an additional travelling allowance of £32 per month. It was proposed to backdate these elements of the allowance to 1st April, 2004. In addition, a monthly training allowance of up to a maximum of 12 hours per month, equating to £135 per month based on a qualified firefighter's rate of pay, was also proposed.

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The full-year costs of the proposed allowances could be funded from the grant received in December, 2003 to support the implementation of the Incident Response and interim Urban Search and Rescue Units in to the Brigade. It was anticipated that this grant would be renewed in due course, at which time the arrangements for allowance payments could be reviewed.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the payment of a combined standby/training allowance to members of the Brigade's UK Fire Service Search and Rescue Team, as outlined above, be approved; and
- (2) that a further report be submitted in due course on the ongoing funding arrangements for the USAR Unit.

97/04 **Consultation: 'Towards a National Workforce Development Strategy**

The Committee considered a draft response to a consultation document proposing a National Workforce Development Strategy for the Fire Service. The consultation document brought together proposals for the development of the Integrated Personal Development System and regional and national training strategies.

Resolved that the draft response be approved for submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

98/04 **Joint Funding – Post of Partnership Director – Safer Walsall Borough Partnership (SWBP)**

The Committee was informed that the Authority was a statutory partner in the Safer Walsall Borough Partnership, which had recently been formed by the merger of the Drug Action Team and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. As part of the new arrangement it was proposed to appoint a Partnership Director at a total cost of £84,000.

It was proposed to fund the post by a 50% contribution from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF), with the remainder of the cost being met by contributions of £10,000 plus a 3% cost of living index from each of the Responsible Authorities involved in the Partnership, these being Walsall MBC, the West Midlands Police Authority, the

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Walsall Primary Care Trust and this Authority. It was noted that funding from Walsall's NRF would cease at the end of March 2006.

The annual cost to the Authority could be met from the Fire Safety Innovation Grant until the end of March 2006. A further report would be required regarding funding contributions towards the post in future years.

Resolved:-

- (1) that expenditure of £10,000 as an ongoing annual contribution towards the funding of the post of Partnership Director of the Safer Walsall Borough Partnership be approved up to 31st March 2006, subject to the Clerk being satisfied on the legal position of the Authority in relation to employer's liability, and to the Chief Fire Officer being satisfied that the Partnership contributes to Fire Service corporate aims;
- (2) that a further report be submitted to the Committee in due course on the funding arrangements for the post of the Partnership Director and its associated support for 2006/2007 onwards.

99/04 **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 follows:-

Minute No. 100/04 - relating to negotiations or consultation on labour relation matters and disclosure would be likely to prejudice those negotiations.

Minute No. 101/04 – relating to the financial or business affairs of other persons.

100/04 **The Integrated Risk Management Action Plan – Second Year (IRMP II)**

The Committee considered a report seeking approval for the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Action Plan 2005/06 and

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the associated consultation strategy.

As part of the Government's modernising agenda, Fire and Rescue Authorities were required to produce an annual IRMP drawn up according to a risk-based system which identified the best allocation of resources and methods of working.

The IRMP for 2004/2005 was approved on 25th March, 2004 and many of the proposals within the Plan had since been implemented. A full assessment of the impact of those actions would be provided in due course.

Members had received a full briefing on the proposed IRMP for 2005/2006, and an Action Plan to implement the provisions of the IRMP had also been prepared. The Authority was required by ODPM Circular 7/2003 to mount a public consultation exercise on the contents of the Action Plan. A draft public consultation document was submitted for consideration by the Committee.

The cost of consultation process would be £50,000 and could be met from existing budgets.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the IRMP Action Plan 2005/2006 as set out in the draft public consultation document be approved;
- (2) that the strategy for the proposed consultation in respect of the 2005/06 Action Plan be approved.

101/04 **Partnership Arrangement with New Deal for Communities (Blakenall Project) Walsall**

The Committee received a report seeking approval to lease the vacant Bank Building at Bloxwich Community Fire Station on a three-year fixed-term lease to the New Deal for Communities (Blakenall) project, for use as a day centre for rehabilitated drug users.

Blakenall had been identified as an area of significant socio-economic need and had been allocated New Deal for Communities funding of £55 m over 10 years. A representative of the West Midlands Fire Service was a member of the New Deal Tasking Group.

The building at Bloxwich Community Fire Station had been vacant for

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over 5 years and was in a poor state of repair. New Deal for Communities wished to lease the whole building for three years at a rent of £7,000 per annum and intended to fund the renovation of the ground floor at a cost of £75,000. It was proposed to use the ground floor premises for a project to be run by the charity 'Addaction' to rehabilitate reformed drug users into society and to enable them to re-enter the employment market. It was emphasised no needle or substance exchanges would be permitted on the premises. The project was due to commence in January 2005.

The building would also provide accommodation for a new Bloxwich branch of the Young Firefighters Association. Other youth and community groups could utilise the building on evenings and weekends.

It was proposed to use the income from the lease to pursue joint fire safety partnership work with New Deal for Communities in the Blakenall area.

Resolved that approval be given to enter into a joint partnership arrangement with New Deal for Communities (Blakenall), Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council and the drug reduction charity 'Addaction' to give effect to the proposals outlined above.

(Meeting ended at 12.15 p.m.)

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