

Minutes of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

12th February 2007, at 11.00 a.m.
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

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

1/07 Chair's Announcements

The Chair reported that an interim specialist in human resources had been appointed with effect from 12th February, 2007, to assist until such time that a permanent Head of Human Resources was recruited.

He reminded Members that arrangements had been made for a visit to the site of the new Headquarters to take place at the conclusion of this meeting. Groundworks were due to commence on 6th March 2007.

2/07 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 4th December 2006 be confirmed as a correct record.

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
12th February, 2007

3/07 **Budget and Precept 2007/2008**

The Authority considered a report on the Capital Programme for 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10, the prudential indicators relating to the Authority's capital financing requirements, the revenue budget and forward looking efficiency statement for 2007/08, and the consequent precept level and resultant amount for each constituent District Council.

In accordance with the Local Government Act, 2003, the Treasurer commented that the budgets presented had been prepared using reasonable and appropriate estimation techniques for both expenditure and income. The budget process was such that all financial pressures faced by the Authority had been considered and resources allocated as appropriate to fulfil the priorities of the Authority. Where resources had not been allocated to identified pressures either; the pressure had been absorbed into the existing budget or the risk associated with not meeting the pressure had been evaluated and appropriate action taken. The robustness of the budget preparation undertaken by the Authority was therefore considered satisfactory.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Authority's Revenue Budget for 2007/2008 of £112.150m, as now submitted, be approved;
- (2) that the Authority's capital programme for 2007/2008, 2008/2009 and 2009/2010, as now submitted, be approved;
- (3) that the Authority's Prudential Indicators as now submitted, be approved;
- (4) that the Authority's Forward Looking 2007/08 Efficiency Statement as now submitted be approved, and that the Treasurer, in conjunction with the Chief Fire Officer, be given delegated authority to submit the on-line statement;

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

12th February, 2007

- (5) that it be noted that the constituent District Councils have formally set their Council Tax bases for the year 2007/2008 in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 made under Section 33(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as follows:

	Tax Base
	£
Birmingham	288,885.00
Coventry	87,386.80
Dudley	97,049.71
Sandwell	84,359.60
Solihull	78,018.00
Walsall	76,388.00
Wolverhampton	<u>70,426.00</u>
	782,513.11
	=====

- (6) that the following amounts be now calculated by the Authority for the year 2007/2008 in accordance with Sections 43 to 48 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:-
- (i) £115,132,000 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 43(2)(a) to (d) of the Act.
 - (ii) £2,982,000 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 43(3)(a) to (b) of the Act.
 - (iii) £112,150,000 being the amount by which the aggregate at (i) above exceeds the aggregate at (ii) above calculated by the Authority in accordance with Section 43(4) of the Act as its budget requirement for the year.
 - (iv) £77,383,000 being the aggregate of the sums which the Authority estimates will be payable for the year into its general fund in respect of formula grant by the aggregate of the sums which the

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

12th February, 2007

Authority estimates will be received in the year from the constituent District Councils in respect of amounts they have estimated as the deficit on their collection funds for 2006/2007.

- (v) £44.429,926 being the amount at (iii) above less the amount at (iv) above all divided by the total amount at (5) above, calculated by the Authority in accordance with Section 44(1) of the Act as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.

(vi) <u>Valuation Bands</u>	£	£
	(to 6 decimals)	(to 2 decimals)
A	29.619995	29.62
B	34.556610	34.56
C	39.493268	39.49
D	44.429926	44.43
E	54.303244	54.30
F	64.176561	64.18
G	74.049878	74.05
H	88.859853	88.86

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (v) above by the number which in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Authority in accordance with Section 47(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

- (vii) that the following precepts be issued to the seven charging authorities in the West Midlands:-

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

12th February, 2007

	£
Birmingham City Council	12,835,139
Coventry City Council	3,882,589
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	4,311,912
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	3,748,091
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	3,466,334
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council	3,393,913
Wolverhampton City Council	3,129,022
Total	<hr/> 34,767,000 <hr/> =====

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (v) above by the appropriate tax base at (5) above in accordance with section 48(2) of the Act, as the amount of precept payable by each constituent District Council.

- (7) that the precept for each District Council as calculated at 6(vii) above be issued in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

4/07 **Monitoring of Finances**

The Authority received a report on the monitoring of finances during 2006/07.

5/07 **Corporate Risk Register and Action Plans**

The Authority considered the Corporate Risk Register and Action Plans that had been drawn up following discussions at the Policy Planning Forum and the Corporate Board. These documents would together form the Strategic Risk Register for the Authority. The Register and Action Plans would be reviewed formally annually, and updated appropriately during the year at the Corporate Board and Executive Committee.

Resolved that the Corporate Risk Register and Action

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
12th February, 2007

6/07 Plans, as now submitted, be approved.
Corporate Strategy and Annual Service Plan

The Authority considered a report setting out the drivers for change in the business planning process; the outcomes of the consultation process in respect of the Action Planning section of the Authority's Annual Service Plan for 2007/08; a draft three year Corporate Strategy for 2007/10; and the draft Annual Service Plan for 2007/08.

The current business planning arrangements had worked well and had received positive recognition in inspection documents.

In pursuit of continuous improvement, it was proposed to change the current arrangements to make service delivery the principal driver in the planning process and to improve the Authority's ability to target resources at risk reduction activity, which in turn would lead to improvements in performance management. The changes would also take account of key external influences such as local strategic partnerships and local area agreements. It was therefore proposed to have a three year Corporate Strategy to be refreshed annually, and an Annual Service Plan combining the Integrated Risk Management Plan with the Business Plan. Performance targets would be included in the Annual Service Plan.

The Authority noted the outcomes of the consultation process in respect of the Action Plan section of the Annual Service Plan as set out in the report.

Members affirmed their commitment to provide these documents in other formats to promote inclusion.

Reference was made to alleged inconsistencies with regard to performance figures relating to Home Fire Safety Checks. The Chief Fire Officer indicated that short risk assessments were being carried out by some fire stations as a pilot scheme and suggested that this information could be creating some confusion. He undertook to look at how performance figures from the pilot scheme were presented in order to correct any misconceptions about how these figures related to full Home Fire Safety Checks.

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
12th February, 2007

Resolved:-

- (1) that the proposed changes to the business planning process be approved;
- (2) that the three year Corporate Strategy for the years 2007 to 2010, as now submitted, be approved, subject to minor amendments;
- (3) that the Annual Service Plan for 2007/2008, as now submitted, be approved.

7/07 **Fire Service Dwellings - Rent**

The Authority considered a report on the proposed increase in rents for fire service dwellings for the 2006/07 and 2008/09 financial years, based on a fair rent assessment.

Resolved:-

- (1) that approval be given to an increase in exclusive rents for Fire Service dwellings with effect from 1st April 2007, and 1st April 2008, as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report;
- (2) that with effect from 1st April 2007, the weekly charge for garages be increased to £5.36 per week plus VAT;
- (3) that in future proposals for increases in rent of fire service dwellings and garages be included as part of the annual budget report.

8/07 **Review of Charges – Fire Certificates, Petroleum Searches and Special Service Charges**

The Authority was requested to approve revised charges for Fire Certificates, Petroleum Premises File Searches and for Special Service Charges.

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
12th February, 2007

The current level of charges had been approved by the Authority in February 2006.

The charges had been adjusted to reflect anticipated inflation affecting the Authority up to March 2008 and, in the case of the Fire Certificates, in accordance with the level of charges recommended in LGA Circular 112/06 and the firefighters' pay award.

Resolved:-

- (1) that approval be given to the revised charges for Fire Certificates, Petroleum Premises File Searches and for Special Service Charges, as now submitted, with effect from 1st April 2007;
- (2) that in future proposals for increases in these charges be included as part of the annual budget report.

9/07 **Regional Control Centre Seminar – Approved Duty**

The Authority was informed that the National Fire Control Project Team had announced a series of members' seminars to provide an update on the progress made with the National Project and enable members and officers to clarify issues relating to their particular region.

The date of the event was yet to be announced.

It was suggested that in future an alternative approval mechanism be considered for approved duty applications.

Resolved that attendance by members at the Regional Control Centres Seminars (date to be announced), be approved and regarded as an approved duty for the purpose of payment of travel and subsistence claims.

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
12th February, 2007

10/07 **Standards Committee – Appointment of Independent Members**

The Authority was advised that the term of office of the two current independent members on the Standards Committee was due to come to an end at the annual meeting on 25th June 2007.

The Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) Regulations 2001 required the Authority to place an advertisement for its independent members in at least one newspaper circulating within its area. It was proposed that the Appointments Committee would short-list and interview applicants and make a recommendation to the Authority on an appointment.

The current independent members were entitled to re-apply for appointment.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Monitoring Officer be authorised to advertise for two independent members of the Standards Committee in accordance with the requirements of the Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) Regulations 2001;
- (2) that the Appointments Committee undertake the selection process and make a recommendation to the Authority on the appointment of two independent members, to serve for a three year term of office, effective from the annual meeting on 25th June 2007.

11/07 **Minutes of the Executive Committee**

The minutes of the meetings held on 27th November and 18th December, 2006 and 29th January, 2007 were received.

12/07 **Minutes of the Appointments Committee**

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
12th February, 2007

The minutes of the meetings held on 23rd and 30th November and 6th and 20th December, 2006 were received.

13/07 **Minutes of the Standards Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2007 were received.

Resolved that the membership of the Standards Committee be increased for 2007/2008 as follows:

6 elected members [Con 2; Lab 2; Lib Dem 2] + 2 independent members.

14/07 **Notes of the Policy Planning Forum**

The notes of the meetings held on 18th December, 2006 and 29th January, 2007 were received.

15/07 **Minutes of the West Midlands Regional Management Board**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st December, 2006 and 25th January, 2007 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.

(Meeting ended at 11.47 am)

<i>Contact Officer: Georgina Wythes Democratic Services Unit Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 0121-569-3791</i>
--

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
12th February, 2007

