

Minutes of the Executive Committee

23rd May, 2005 at 12 noon
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

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

Observers: Councillors Birbeck, Bowen, Davis, Foster, Jackson,
Matchet, Mulhall, Rogers, Ryder, Tagger and Ward.

31/05 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meetings held on 28th February, 21st March and 4th April, 2005 be approved as a correct record.

32/05 **Local Government Association Member Arrangements for Fire and Rescue Services**

The Clerk advised the Committee of revised arrangements shortly to be introduced by the Local Government Association (LGA) to deal with fire and rescue service business.

The LGA Safer Communities Board would have strategic responsibility for community safety and public protection matters, whilst the Fire Modernisation Task Group would be remodelled and would deal with operational fire and rescue service matters. The Fire Service Forum would continue to operate, and negotiations on pay and conditions would remain with the Employers Organisation National Joint Council (Employers' Side). It was hoped that the new arrangements would operate from June 2005.

33/05 **Local Government Association Urban Commission**

The Clerk reported that the Local Government Association (LGA) had invited nominations from the Authority for representation on the LGA Urban Commission for 2005/06. The Authority's representation in

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2004/05 was Councillor Kazi and the Chief Fire Officer. The closing date for nominations was 24th June, 2005 which was before the Authority's Annual Meeting.

Resolved that this matter be deferred pending receipt of all nominations for membership of the Authority for 2005/06 from constituent district councils, and that thereafter the Chair and Vice Chair be authorised to make an appointment to the Urban Commission by the closing date of 24th June, 2005.

34/05 **Provision of Performance Indicator Data to Authority Members**

The Committee considered whether the existing method of providing Performance Indicator Data was working satisfactorily.

Members felt the arrangements had worked well, and congratulated the Lead Member, Councillor Lawrence, and the officers on the way they had conducted their duties in this regard.

Resolved that the arrangements for providing Performance Indicator Data approved by the Authority in Minute No. 60/04 be continued.

35/05 **Best Value Performance Indicators Outturn Data 2004/05**

The Committee received a report on the performance of the Brigade against the performance indicators set out the Authority's Best Value Performance Plan for 2004/05.

It was noted that these statistics represented the best ever performance for the Brigade against fire-related indicators, with significant reductions in the total number of fires, property and vehicle fires, accidental fires in dwellings, arson and secondary and chimney fires. The year-on-year reduction in deaths from accidental fires was also continuing. The Chief Fire Officer expressed his appreciation of the hard work involved in reducing these critical indicators, which represented a very positive acclamation of the work of the Brigade. Members made particular reference to the fall in the number of deaths from accidental fires from 23 in 2002/03 to 12 in 2004/05.

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36/05 **Remote Intelligent Management Support and Training (RIMSAT) Project – Final Report**

The Committee received a report on the successful conclusion of the Remote Intelligent Management Support and Training (RIMSAT) Project.

This knowledge management project had been funded by the European Commission to research technology that could be used to assist at major incidents by providing advice based on experience from similar incidents, and to prioritise risks evident at the incident ground.

Officers from the West Midlands Fire Service had collaborated in the project, and their contribution had been credited in the final report. This report had received a wide circulation and had raised the profile both of the Service and of knowledge management work. A book entitled 'Learning from Critical Incidents' had been published to summarise the project outcomes, and two officers from the Service were credited as authors. The Service had benefited from experience of working in the European arena, and had also adopted a number of the techniques developed from the project, which now supported the Authority in its risk management work.

It was likely that there would be further opportunities to follow up the outcomes of the RIMSAT project.

37/05 **Advanced Multi-Modal Intelligence for Remote Assistance (AMIRA) Project**

Further to Minute No. 36/05 above, the Committee were informed that the RIMSAT project outcomes were being developed by a consortium in a new project. The Advanced Multi-Modal Intelligence for Remote Assistance (AMIRA) project would research the means to provide people engaged in field work away from a fixed base with decision support using multiple input methods including speech recognition technology.

The West Midlands Fire Service had been invited to participate in the project's research and testing work. This would involve the Transport Engineering Workshops and the Community Protection Intervention Team, and would require the support of a Project Manager.

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It was proposed that the West Midlands Fire Service would act as sub-contractor for Kadaira Software. In return, Kadaira would provide direct funding of 62,250 Euro, and a supported copy of the Kadaira Advisor, a diagnostic support application that had formed a major component of the RIMSAT project, and which could support the Authority's Integrated Risk Management System.

The AMIRA project commenced in June 2004 and would conclude in June 2006. The post of Project Manager would be advertised as a secondment to the Community Protection Department for the duration of the project and a post-project review and reporting period of a further two months. At current exchange rates the funding from Kadaira would meet the estimated cost of the secondment.

Resolved that participation in the AMIRA project be approved.

38/05 **Proposal to build a Carbonaceous Fire Behaviour Training Facility with Birmingham International Airport**

The Committee received a report outlining proposals to establish a Carbonaceous Fire Behaviour Training Facility in partnership with Birmingham International Airport (BIA)

This facility, to be based at the Airport, would enable the advanced training of personnel in fire behaviour and improve their firefighting techniques with regard to enclosed compartment fires. It would also support the introduction of Phases 2 and 3 of positive pressure ventilation techniques. Firefighter safety would be enhanced and the effectiveness of the Brigade's operational response would be improved. It would also enhance the training facilities available to the Commercial and Industrial Training Unit. There would also be opportunities for regional collaboration.

It was proposed to enter into a partnership with BIA to jointly purchase the facility, which was estimated to have a 10-year life. Groundworks and site would be provided by BIA, and the construction, running and maintenance costs would be shared. The estimated cost of the Authority's share of the construction costs was £70,000, which could be funded from the 2005/06 Capital Programme. Annual maintenance costs would be approximately £2,000, which could be met from the existing Training Centre budget.

Resolved that, subject to the completion of a formal contract, approval be given to pursue a partnership with BIA to purchase and operate a Carbonaceous Fire Behaviour Training Facility at

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Birmingham Airport.

39/05 **General Income Write Offs up to £1,000**

The Committee noted a quarterly report on general income items up to £1,000 written off as irrecoverable for the period January to March 2005.

40/05 **Quotations received in excess of £50,000 – Quarterly Update**

The Committee noted a quarterly report on quotations received in excess of £50,000 between January and March 2005.

41/05 **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. 42/05 – relating to negotiations or consultation on labour relations matters and disclosure would be likely to prejudice those negotiations.

Minute No. 43/05 – relating to terms proposed for the disposal/acquisition of property or the supply of goods and services and disclosure would be likely to prejudice the Authority.

42/05 **Update on the New Duty System and Shift Pattern for Operational Station Based Personnel**

Further to Authority Minute No. 21/05, the Committee received a report on the current position in the negotiations over the introduction of a new duty system and shift pattern for operational station-based personnel to support the Integrated Risk Management Plan.

It had not been possible to reach agreement with the Fire Brigades Union on the new duty system and shift pattern, and the matter had therefore been referred to the National Joint Council's Technical Advisory Panel, which would seek to broker an agreement.

The Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) would not be able to hear this matter any earlier than 14th and 15th June, 2005. The proposed start

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date for the new duty system and shift pattern to meet the requirements of the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan was 9th September, 2005, and to safeguard the Authority's position, it was necessary to issue '90 day notices' of changes to terms and conditions of service to operational station-based personnel. It was hoped to reach a collective agreement through the TAP process, and the NJC had been informed that the issue of the 90-day notices should be regarded as a technicality.

Resolved:

- (1) that the Committee delegates authority to the appropriate officers to seek a collective agreement in the interests of the Authority over the introduction of a new duty system and shift pattern at the National Joint Council TAP;
- (2) that the Committee approves the issue of 90-day notices of changes to terms and conditions of service to operational station-based personnel to support the introduction of the Integrated Risk Management Plan Action Plan 2005/06 in September, 2005;
- (3) that a further report be submitted in due course on the outcome of the TAP hearing.

43/05 **Fire Service Headquarters Relocation Project**

Further to Authority Minute No.18/04, the Committee received a report updating Members on options identified for the relocation of Fire Service Headquarters and the financial implications of each option, together with an outline of the implications of remaining on the existing site.

The report outlined the work of the Project Board set up in February 2004, and of the various consultants employed to assist with the project.

The Committee were recommended to authorise the opening of negotiations for the acquisition of an alternative site on the basis of Option 6 as set out in the report.

Resolved:

- (1) that the Chief Fire Officer in consultation with the Head of

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Sandwell Property Services be authorised to enter into negotiations to acquire the freehold interest in relation to Option 6 to include an Exclusivity Agreement or Option Arrangement on terms to be agreed;

- (2) that approval in principle be given to co-locate Fire Control within the premises referred to in (1) above, pending the implementation of Regional Fire Control, subject to a further report in due course on the financial implications of this proposal;
- (3) that the proposals now outlined to negate the requirement to provide an alternative site for the Central Fire Station be approved in principle, for further detailed consideration as part of the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Action Plan 3 for 2006/07;
- (4) that Members note that the response from the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport pertaining to the immunity from listing is not expected to be received by the Authority until July, 2005, and that this will impact on the valuation of the existing site;
- (5) that Members note the additional budgetary impact of remedial works that will be required at the existing site if the relocation does not take place.

(Meeting ended at 12.40 pm)

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