

## **Minutes of the Executive Committee**

**28<sup>th</sup> January 2008, at 12.15 pm**  
**at Fire Service Headquarters,**  
**Lancaster Circus Queensway, Birmingham**

**Present:** Councillor Howard (Chairman);  
Councillors S Davis, Idrees, Hinton, Jackson, Ryder and  
Stevenson.

**Apologies:** Councillors Foster and Ward (Vice-Chairman).

### 4/08 **Consultation with Non-Domestic Ratepayers**

In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Committee met to consult with representatives of non-domestic ratepayers on the setting of the Authority's budget and precept for 2008/2009. The Treasurer gave a presentation on the draft budget proposals.

Mr T Carroll from the Black Country Chamber of Commerce and Mr Jamieson of Keltruck attended the meeting. Mr Carroll congratulated the Authority on the quality and value for money of the service it provided.

The Committee thanked Mr Carroll and Mr Jamieson for their attendance and noted the comments made.

**Resolved** that a report on the budget and precept for 2008/2009 be submitted to the Authority on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

### 5/08 **Audit Commission Consultation on Proposed Work Programme and Scale of Fees 2008/2009 and Indicative Fee Proposals for 2009/10 and 2010/11**

The Committee noted the Brigade's response to the Audit Commission's consultation on its proposed work programme and scale of fees for 2008/09 and indicative scales of fees for 2009/10 and 2010/11.

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Members expressed disappointment that they had not been consulted before it was sent and felt that the response was not robust enough. The Chief Fire Officer undertook to review current practices with regard to responding to consultation documents to ensure that a political response was obtained in strategic matters.

Members expressed their dissatisfaction with the proposed increase in fees, given the current restrictions on public sector pay increases. Members also felt that there were many unclear elements within the report, which made it difficult to give a comprehensive response. The increases were likely to impact most upon the metropolitan fire authorities and it was suggested that the Chairs of those authorities needed to meet to discuss the matter.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that the Chief Fire Officer be requested to submit a further response on behalf of the Authority reflecting the views of the Committee;
- (2) that the Chief Fire Officer be requested to write to all Members of Parliament requesting their support for the Authority's objections.

6/08      **Analysis of Progress Towards Key Objectives – Third Quarterly Report 2007/2008**

The Committee noted the progress from October to December 2007 towards key objectives from departmental action plans.

7/08      **West Midlands Regional Fire Control Centre Members' Agreement with Local Authority Controlled Company**

Approval was sought to enter into the Members' Agreement with the Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC), which would regulate the arrangements for the management and financing of the Regional Control Centre (RCC) and enable the LACC to operate formally. Each of the five participating fire authorities in the West Midlands region was required to formally approve the agreement and it was reported that Staffordshire and Warwickshire had already done so.

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The report also sought approval to the interim arrangements for cost apportionment, which would form the financial agreement elements of the Members' Agreement.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that approval be given to enter into the Members' Agreement as now submitted with the Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC) for the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services Regional Control Centre Limited in relation to the management and funding arrangements for the Regional Fire Control (RCC);
- (2) that approval be given to the interim cost apportionment proposals for the West Midlands region which forms part of the Members' Agreement and that it be noted that this Authority's interim cost apportionment, at cut over to the RCC, is based on 48.31% of the total operating costs using the indicated population figures;
- (3) that the Clerk be authorised to sign the Members' Agreement on behalf of the Authority.

8/08      **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 reasons:

Minutes Nos. 9/08, 10/08, 11/08 and 12/08 relate to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information);

Minute No. 13/08 relates to any individual and to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority, or a minister of the crown, and employees of, or office holders, under the authority.

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9/08     **National Firelink Project: Provision of Interim Radio Solution**

The Committee was informed that notification had been received from the Communities and Local Government (CLG) National Firelink Project Team of a delay of approximately three months in relation to the installation, testing, training and operation of the agreed Airwave Interim Radio Solution (IRS).

CLG had previously agreed to fund the interim system, which was to be installed by the end of May 2008. However, the revised completion date of August 2008 posed a serious risk to the movement of the existing Fire Control to the new Headquarters site and to the decommissioning of the existing headquarters site by the deadline of December 2008.

Approval was therefore sought for the West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) to procure the IRS direct in order to mitigate the risks identified, should Firelink/Airwave be unable to provide written assurances by 29<sup>th</sup> February 2008. There was no specific budget to cover the indicated costs of £120,000 of procuring the system and it was therefore proposed that a New Burdens application would be made to the CLG.

The Committee noted that Airwave had indicated that it would not permit WMFS to subsequently connect the new Airwave radios to the WMFS procured Cyfas system, despite it being an identical system to that which the CLG would have installed and that a CLG funded Cyfas system would still need to be installed subsequently.

The Committee acknowledged the risks associated with the proposal and noted that further discussions were required with CLG on an appropriate solution.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that, should it not be possible for the Chief Fire Officer to secure the necessary written assurances from Firelink/Airwave by the 29<sup>th</sup> February 2008 that they are able to deliver the IRS at the new FSHQ before August 2008, the following course of action be taken:-
  - (a) an exception be made under the provisions of the Procurement Standing Order 1/8, paragraph 2.15 (b) to enable an identical Firelink/Airwave IRS to be procured direct from Cyfas Limited for the sum of £120,000 to enable the solution to be installed and fully operational

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by end of July 2008;

- (b) the Chief Fire Officer submit a formal New Burdens Funding claim to CLG to meet the additional costs incurred in providing the Cyfas IRS.

10/08    **New Fire Station Headquarters – Fit-out Contract for Main Building/Fire Control and 25 year Network Rail Option**

Further to Minute No. 21/07 of the Policy Planning Forum (22<sup>nd</sup> October 2007) the Committee was informed that further discussions had taken place with Network Rail regarding the lease of the four railway arches at the new headquarters site. Consequently, a new offer had now been made to the Authority for a 25 year lease period, which included a break clause at 15 years. The longer lease period would provide the Authority with a cash saving of approximately £32,000 in the first 15 years of the lease.

The Committee was also informed that the Vice-Chairman and relevant officers had opened five tenders for the fit out works at the new Headquarters site on 28th December 2007. It was recommended that the contract be awarded to the lowest tenderer, CPL interiors PLC.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that Minute No. 52/07(1) (5<sup>th</sup> October 2007) be rescinded and the Clerk be authorised to enter into a 25 year lease with Network Rail for the lease of four railways arches at the rear of the new headquarters site at Vauxhall Road, Nechells on the terms and conditions now reported;
- (2) that, subject to the preparation of a formal contract by the Clerk and the necessary consent from any Government departments concerned, the contract for fit out works at the new Headquarters site be awarded to CPL Interiors PLC, being the lowest tender received, at a cost of £773,000, which includes a provisional sum for additional anticipated works.

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11/08     **New Fire Service Headquarters - Supply and Installation of New Telephone Switch and Telephones**

The Committee was informed of the need to upgrade the existing telephone network for the move to the new Headquarters site.

Research had confirmed that Siemens Enterprise Communications was the only company that could supply and install the required equipment and the Committee was informed of the two options and technical specifications available for the replacement system.

Funding for the new equipment was available within the approved capital scheme for the new Headquarters.

**Resolved:-**

- (1)     that an exception be made under the provisions of the Procurement Standing Order 1/8, paragraph 2.15 (b) to enable the procurement of a replacement telephone switch and telephones for the new Fire Service Headquarters from Siemens Enterprise Communications;
- (2)     that, subject to the outcome and recommendations of technical evaluations, approval be given to the procurement of the Siemens HiPath 8000 at a cost of £158,261;
- (3)     that, in the event that the Siemens HiPath 8000 proves unsuitable, approval be given to the procurement of Siemens HiPath 4000 at a cost of £140,300 and that it be noted that the HiPath 8000 system can be returned to Siemens at no cost to the Authority.

12/08     **Evaluation of Tender Returns for Supply and Installation of Brigade Wide Area Network**

The Committee was informed that the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and relevant officers had opened six electronic tenders on 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2008 for the supply and installation of a wide area network (WAN) at the new Headquarters site.

Following an evaluation of the tenders it was recommended that the tender submitted by NTL:Telewest in the sum of £265,200 be accepted.

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**Resolved** that, subject to the preparation of a formal contract by the Clerk and the necessary consent from any Government departments concerned, the contract for the supply and installation of a wide area network (WAN) at the new eadquarters site be awarded to NTL:Telewest at a cost of £265,200.

13/08 **Review of Pay and Grading Structure for Principal Officers and Performance Related Pay**

Further to Minute No. 41/07 (23<sup>rd</sup> July 2007) the Committee was advised of a number of options for the structure and remuneration packages for the Authority's Principal Officer Team.

**Resolved** that the Head of Human Resources be authorised to invite a range of external consultants to submit proposals for undertaking a review of Principal Officers' pay, taking the following into particular consideration:-

1. the reporting structure;
2. pay levels, including options for performance related pay;
3. the appropriate number, job size and roles of Principal Officers.

(Meeting ended at 1.50 pm)

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