

## **Minutes of a Meeting of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority**

**16<sup>th</sup> September, 2013 at 11.00 am**  
**at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham**

**Present:** Councillor Edwards [Chair];  
Councillor Idrees [Vice-Chair];  
Councillors Aston, Singh Atwal, Auluck, Chambers,  
Clinton, Collingswood, Davis, Delaney, Douglas-  
Maul, Eustace, Finnegan, Hogarth, Mottram JP,  
O'Reilly, Quinnen, Sealey, Shackleton, Spence,  
Tranter, Walsh, Wright and Young.

**Apologies:** Councillors Foster and Yardley;  
Mr Ager.

### 59/13 **Declaration of Interest**

Councillor Edwards declared a non-disclosable pecuniary interest in Minute No. 67/13 below (Monitoring of Finances).

### 60/13 **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair announced that the Chief Fire Officer would be retiring from the Service on 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2013.

The Chair, on behalf of members, placed on record his thanks to Mr Vijith Randeniya for his 30 ½ years service to the fire service across the country, with 13 of those years working for the West Midlands Fire Service as Deputy Chief Fire Officer from 2000 and Chief Fire Officer from 2009.

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It was thanks to Mr Randeniya and his team for their forward thinking in preparing the Service for the reductions in spend in 2010 and implementing a number of innovative changes in working practices including the use of Brigade Response Vehicles, introducing staffing reductions and new staffing structures.

Mr Randeniya had worked his way up the ranks from firefighter to his current post as Chief Fire Officer and President of the Chief Fire Officers' Association. Mr Randeniya had given a sterling service to the Authority and to the communities of the West Midlands as well as making a remarkable achievement nationally.

The Chair, on behalf of the Authority, presented Mr Randeniya with a retirement gift and thanked him for his loyal service to the Fire Service since 1983. The Authority wished Mr Randeniya a long and happy retirement and wished him well in his future endeavours.

Members of the Authority also paid tribute to Mr Randeniya.

Mr Randeniya in turn placed on record his appreciation to members of the Authority for supporting him and officers in making a positive contribution within the West Midlands and to the fire service and made references to the many successes of the Authority, in particular, the recent fire at the Smethwick recycling plant.

61/13

### **Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the annual meeting of the Authority on 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2013 and the extraordinary meeting of the Authority on 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

62/13

### **Acting Up Arrangements to the Post of Chief Fire Officer**

Following approval of the Chief Fire Officer's retirement by the Authority on 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2013 (see Minute No. 58/13), consideration was given to proposals to act up the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Mr Philip Loach, pending the necessary recruitment to the post of Chief Fire Officer on a permanent basis.

Currently, there was no provision to enable acting up arrangements for the post of Chief Fire Officer within the Constitution. It was therefore proposed to amend the Constitution so as to include future acting up arrangements for this post within the Terms of Reference of the Appointments Committee.

The Chief Fire Officer did have delegated authority to determine and implement acting up arrangements in respect of vacancies occurring at Deputy Chief Fire Officer/Assistant Chief Fire Officer/Director level, subject to regular review in accordance with the Authority's employment policies. The Acting Chief Fire Officer would be able to exercise these delegations.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that Mr Philip Loach, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, act up to the post of Chief Fire Officer from 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2013 until the substantive appointment to the post of Chief Fire Officer is effected;
- (2) that the Appointments Committee Terms of Reference set out in the Constitution be amended, as set out in the Appendix, so as to explicitly state that any future acting up arrangements to the post of Chief Fire Officer be delegated to the Appointments Committee.

63/13

**Review of Principal Officer Management Structure and Support Staff reporting directly to the Chief Fire Officer**

Approval was sought to review the principal management structure and support staff reporting directly to the Chief Fire Officer in order to meet effectively the challenges set out within 'The Plan' and Sir Ken Knight's report 'Facing the Future'.

The context within which these challenges would need to operate was markedly different to what existed when these structures had previously been assessed.

A review was also necessary to look at different ways to achieve efficiencies as part of the further financial challenges recently identified.

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The review would be scoped by the Acting Chief Fire Officer and the Clerk to the Authority. It was felt that a delay in the review pending the appointment of a permanent Chief Fire Officer would hold back the Authority's progress on these matters.

The Chair felt that in addition, a member working group should be set up to provide a steer to officers and to give feedback on the review.

### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that the Acting Chief Fire Officer and the Clerk to the Authority, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, develop a scoping document for a review of the staffing structure and pay and conditions of service for principal officers (Assistant Chief Fire Officers, Directors, Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Chief Fire Officer) and any posts providing direct support to these officers;
- (2) that a member working be established to provide a steer to officers on the review of the principal officer management structure and that the membership of this group be determined by the Chair of the Authority.

64/13

### **Annual Report 2012/13**

The Authority noted the Annual Report 2012/13 which outlined the performance of the Service over the year 2012-2013 and included performance indicator targets and outcomes against the following key priority areas: Communities and Partnerships, Response, People and Value for Money.

Members felt that the report was a good descriptor of an excellent service and congratulated officers.

Councillor Finnegan, on behalf of members of the Authority, also placed on record his congratulations to the following firefighters:-

Group Commander Bill Gough – recently awarded the Queen's Fire Service Medal;

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Firefighter Richard Stanton from Canley Community Station – recently awarded a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE);

Firefighter Paul McCarron of Sutton Coldfield Fire Station BlueWatch – named Hero of the Year for leading approximately 40 people to safety from a burning building whilst on holiday in Majorca.

65/13

### **Audit Findings 2012/2013**

The Authority noted the Audit Findings report 2012/2013 produced by the Authority's external auditors, Grant Thornton.

The report highlighted the key matters arising from the audit of the Authority's financial statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2013 and would be used to report the auditor's findings to those charged with governance in accordance with the requirements of International Standard on Auditing.

Under the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice auditors were required to report whether, in their opinion, the Authority's financial statements presented a true and fair view of the financial position, its expenditure and income for the year and whether they had been properly prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting. They were also required to reach a formal conclusion on whether the Authority had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources (the Value for Money conclusion).

Auditors found the Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources provided a Value for Money conclusion. They were also satisfied that the Annual Governance Statement fairly reflected the Authority's risk assurance and governance framework and it was not aware of any significant risks that were not disclosed within the Statement.

Auditors did, however, make one recommendation relating to the introduction of further controls to ensure that standing data in relation to pension transfers was accurate. This would be looked at by officers.

66/13      **Statement of Accounts 2012/2013**

A summary of the Authority's Statement of Accounts for the financial year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2013 was submitted for consideration.

A summary of the Statement of Accounts had also been produced and was available on the Authority's website, together with the full accounts.

**Resolved** that the Statement of Accounts for 2012/13 and subsequent letter of representation be approved.

67/13      **Monitoring of Finances**

The Authority noted a report on the monitoring of finances to the end of August 2013, which included revenue expenditure and the capital programme.

68/13      **One Voice: A National Sprinkler Promotion Strategy**

Approval was sought to endorse 'One voice: a national sprinkler promotion strategy' ('National Sprinkler Strategy') produced by the Local Government Association Sprinklers Campaign Group for all Fire and Rescue Services.

The strategy represented 'the Fire and Rescue Service's vision and direction on the issue of mandatory sprinklers for the vulnerable groups of our society' particularly within domestic, educational and residential premises. It also formed part of the Sprinkler Local Campaign Toolkit, which had been developed by the Sprinklers Campaign Group, to provide a support base for local campaigning by creating closer working relationships with stakeholders through education and influencing a change in culture within the wider building industry.

The West Midlands Fire Service was committed to promoting the installation of automatic fire suppression systems in all premises where their inclusion would support the vision 'Making the West Midlands Safer'.

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By endorsing the strategy, the Authority would reaffirm its commitment to promote the benefits of sprinklers to protect life, property, heritage and the environment from the effects of fire.

Members thanked the Chair, who chaired the Local Government Association Sprinklers Campaign Group, for pushing the sprinklers issue on a local and national level.

However, concern was expressed that despite sprinklers minimising the impact of fire and essentially helping to save properties and lives, the Government were still reluctant to legislate on them. A strong lobby on this issue was now being built and a sprinklers campaign would be held for a week in February 2014, led by the Chief Fire Officers' Association and supported by the Local Government Association, to promote the issue.

**Resolved** that 'One voice: a national sprinkler promotion strategy' be endorsed.

### **69/13      Minutes of the Appointments Committee**

The minutes of the Appointments Committee meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2013, were received.

### **70/13      Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee**

The minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2013, were received.

### **71/13      Minutes of the Standards Committee**

The minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2013, were received.

### **72/13      Notes of the Policy Planning Forum**

The notes of the Policy Planning Forum meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2013, were received.

73/13      **Exclusion of the Public**

**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 relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

74/13      **Insurance Arrangements**

The Treasurer and Chief Fire Officer reported that the Authority's external insurance arrangements were due for renewal on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2013. All policies had been reviewed by the Authority's specialist insurance broker and a schedule of recommendations for renewal was submitted including an update on the fidelity guarantee insurance.

In relation to a query from Councillor Spence, the Treasurer undertook to provide a briefing note on the level of claims made by the Authority over the past two years.

Following a query on why the premium for renewing motor fleet blue light private vehicles had doubled since 2012, it was reported that a number of flexi duty officers had now been included into the blue light cover policy.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that the insurance arrangements for the Authority for the period commencing October 2013 be approved;
- (2) that the Treasurer prepare a briefing note for Councillor Spence and the Principal Opposition Group Leader on the level of claims made by the Authority over the past two years.



75/13

**Planned Procurement Exercises for 2013/14**

Approval was sought to a number of planned tender exercises for goods and services during 2013/14, in accordance with Procurement Standing Orders.

Following a query from Councillor Finnegan on the financial viability of installing solar systems, the Director of Resources undertook to submit a report to whether there were environmental and financial benefits to installing solar systems, prior to awarding the contract.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that the following tender exercises for the provision of goods and services to West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority during 2013/14 be proceeded with:-
  - drill yard/off ramp repair works;
  - installation of solar systems;
  - video conferencing;
  - personnel tracking system;
  - IT hardware for frontline appliances;
  - Dignity for All building works;
  - leadership and development training (Acua);
- (2) that the Director of Resources submit a further report on the environmental and financial benefits to installing solar systems, prior to awarding the contract.

76/13

**Contract Awards Summary for Period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a list of contracts in excess of £100,000 awarded between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2013.

(Meeting ended at 12.10 pm)

Contact Officer: Suky Suthi-Nagra Democratic Services Unit Sandwell MBC 0121-569-3479
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**Appendix**

**Appointments Committee**

To make the appointment of Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer(s) and non-uniformed Directors.

To make an appointment to act up to the post of Chief Fire Officer.

To consider and make a recommendation to the Authority on the dismissal or other disciplinary action in respect of the Chief Fire Officer.

To hear and decide upon appeals by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Director of Resources or Director of Human Resources against dismissal or other disciplinary action.

Pursuant to Section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011, to shortlist and interview candidates for appointment as independent person of the Standards Committee, and to make a recommendation to the Authority as to the person/s to be appointed.

To submit its minutes to the Authority.