

<p>Minutes of the Executive Committee</p>
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3rd April 2006 at 12.00 noon
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

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

Observers; Councillors Birbeck, S G Davis, Douglas-Maul, Jackson
Jones, Matchet, Rogers, Tagger, Ward and Mr Topliss.

11/06 **Early Day Motion – Sprinklers in Schools**

The Committee was informed that Celia Barlow MP (Hove) had tabled an Early Day Motion (ref: 1726 – Water Sprinklers in Schools) concerning the installation of sprinklers in schools.

As a part of the strategic level approach to making West Midlands safer, officers had been working with the Chief Executive of the National Governors' Association (NGA) and the Motion was one of the outcomes of this work.

The EDM had cross party support and was tabled as part of a Westminster Hall Debate on Fire Safety and Sprinklers that was secured by Celia Barlow, MP (Hove). Currently, 82 MPs had signed the Motion, 11 of which were West Midlands MPs. Work to attract further support was ongoing.

12/06 **Home Fire Safety Check Home Approach Policy**

The Committee was asked to approve the Home Approach policy to be adopted by Fire Service personnel when gaining referrals and carrying out Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs).

Executive Committee

3rd April 2006

The policy would enable those most at risk from fire, as identified in the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), to be targeted for prevention work.

The representative bodies had been consulted on the policy and were in support of it.

Resolved that the Home Approach Policy for carrying out Home Fire Safety Checks, be approved, as now submitted.

13/06 **Provision of Technical Pensions Advice to Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority**

Approval was sought for the Authority to enter into a formal agreement for the provision of technical pensions advice to Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority.

In view of recent changes to the current Firefighters' Pension Scheme and the proposed introduction of a new Firefighters' Pension Scheme in April 2006, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire FRA had made a request to the Authority for the provision of technical pensions advice on a number of issues, including high level interpretation of pensions issues; confirmation that their processes are correct; advice on complicated cases and to train staff.

It was anticipated that a time commitment of between six and eight hours per week would be required and a financial contribution would be received from Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.

The arrangement would be reviewed after three months, which would enable the Authority to determine more precisely the specific requirements and allow the assessment of capacity should the advice be required on an ongoing basis.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Chief Fire Officer be authorised to enter into an agreement with Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority for the provision of technical pensions advice;
- (2) that the Chief Fire Officer review the agreement after a period of three months and submit a further report on any proposed ongoing arrangements.

Executive Committee

3rd April 2006

14/06 Quotations Received in Excess of £50,000 – Quarterly Update

The Committee noted a report detailing contracts awarded in excess of £50,000.

15/06 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 for the following reasons: -

Minute No. 16/06 relates to an individual.

Minute No. 17/06 relates to 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 or, or office holders under, the Authority.

(Vice-Chair in the Chair)

16/06 Mutual Assistance to Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

The Committee was informed that the Authority had entered into an agreement for Operational Mutual Assistance with Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority.

As part of the modernisation process, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority had appointed a non-uniformed officer to undertake the role of Principal Officer. The responsibilities of the role however excluded the provision of Gold Command operational cover. Consequently, the Authority had made an approach to the West Midlands FRA for its Principal Officers to provide such cover on a one week in four basis.

Executive Committee

3rd April 2006

Currently the demand for officers at this level to attend operational incidents in the Staffordshire area equated to 8 to 12 calls per year. It was not anticipated that the arrangement would affect the Gold Command operational cover in the West Midlands. However, the operation of the arrangements would be monitored over a period of 12 months and a further report would be submitted if necessary.

A financial contribution would be received from Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire FRA for the provision of the cover, and it was proposed that this be used to pay an annual allowance to the Principal Officers concerned.

In accordance with Sections 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister had been notified of the agreement.

Officers present affected by this proposal declared a prejudicial interest in this matter.

Resolved to recommend to the Authority that approval be given to the payment of appropriate allowances to the Chief Fire Officer, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and two Assistant Chief Fire Officers for the provision of Gold Command operational cover to Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority in accordance with the agreement as now submitted.

17/06 Outcome of Joint Review of the Shift System for Station Based Operational Personnel

Further to Minute No. 13/06 of the Authority (13th February 2006), the Committee was informed of the outcome of the joint review of duty systems and shift patterns for station based operational personnel.

The review had examined various options for a revised shift system and had also included a staff survey, a review of the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), and consideration of outstanding conditions of service issues. The review had been completed by 31st March 2006 and a number of recommendations had been made, which were supported by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU).

Executive Committee

3rd April 2006

Some of the recommendations of the review were dependent upon changes to the current IRMP. A public consultation period on proposed changes was therefore underway and due to end on 9th May 2006. Any amendments to the duty systems and shift pattern would be dependent on the outcome of this consultation.

The Authority had previously agreed that whilst the review was underway interim arrangements would be put in place specifically making concessions in respect of annual leave; additional travelling expenses; and an allowance for finishing at midnight. It was proposed that these interim arrangements be extended until any amendments to the duty system and shift pattern were implemented. It was anticipated that any new arrangements would be implemented in September 2006.

The Committee was informed of the financial implications of the proposals.

The successful implementation of the outcome of the Joint Review of the Shift System would not only resolve the industrial dispute over the consequential issues arising from the introduction of the new duty system, but would also address one of the strategic corporate risks reported to the Authority, namely that of improving staff morale.

Resolved:-

- (1) that, subject to the outcome of the public consultation over the Phase B Action Plan of the Integrated Risk Management Plan, the conclusion of the Joint Review of the Shift System be approved as the basis for introducing a revised duty system and shift pattern for station based operational personnel;
- (2) that approval be given to continue with interim arrangements in respect of annual leave concessions, additional travelling expenses and the midnight finish, (as agreed by Minute No. 75/05 of the Authority on 5th December 2005) until any amended shift pattern is implemented.

Executive Committee

3rd April 2006

- (3) that a report be presented to the Executive Committee in October 2006 with regard to a) the actual costs incurred as a result of the interim arrangements; b) predicted costs for the period to the end of the financial year as a result of the implementation of the new system and c) any residual issues that require the resolution of the Authority.

(Meeting ended at 12.20 pm)

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