

Minutes of the Executive Committee

30th January 2006 at 1.00 pm
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

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

Observers; Councillors Birbeck, S G Davis, Douglas-Maul, Jackson
and Ward.

Apology: Councillor Lawrence

1/06 **Consultation Exercise – 2006/08 National Framework and Strategy
for Children and Young People – FSC 52-2005**

The Committee received the Authority's draft response to a consultation exercise carried out within the Brigade in response to Fire Service Circular 52-2005. The circular requested responses to questions relating to the draft Fire and Rescue National Framework for 2006-2008 and the draft Fire and Rescue Service Strategy for Children and Young People.

Resolved that the response to FSC 52-2005 - 'Consultation Exercise: 2006-2008 National Framework and Strategy for Children and Young People' be approved as now submitted.

2/06 **Outcome of the Review of Staffing in Training and Development**

Approval was sought to vary the establishment of the Brigade Training Centre by changing a uniformed post of Station Officer in the Human Resource Department to a non-uniformed post of Development Programme Manager, and increasing the level of administrative support.

A review of staffing had concluded that the section would benefit more from a non-uniformed specialist. The proposed new post, graded at Salary Grade 10, would manage the delivery of the development

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training programme, manage the section's staff and deliver specific areas of training.

The review had also considered the current capacity available to perform administration and customer support functions within the Brigade Training Centre since the introduction of the new development programmes and had concluded that the workload had increased significantly in the last 2 years. In addition, there had also been an increase in demand for NVQ based Initial Firefighter Courses, Operational/Command skills and Manager Training Courses. It was therefore proposed to increase the capacity for administration and customer support.

Cost savings from the changes proposed in the Development Training Section would be used to support the increase in capacity.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the post of Station Officer (Development Training) be disestablished;
- (2) that a new post of Development Programme Manager, (Salary Grade 10) be established within the Brigade Training Centre;
- (3) that a new post of Administrative Assistant (Salary Grade 6) be established within the Brigade Training Centre.

3/06

Proposed Renewal of Lease of Office Space at Oldbury Fire Station to Oldbury Town Team

Approval was sought to allow the continued use of office space at Oldbury Fire Station by the Oldbury Town Team until 31st March 2008.

The Oldbury Town Team had occupied the office space since February 2003 to undertake neighbourhood renewal and regeneration projects. This had resulted in closer partnership working with the Fire Service and had further developed links with the community, enabling the delivery of a range of services to the most vulnerable members of the community.

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The annual rental charged was £3,500 and had been calculated in liaison with Sandwell MBC's Corporate Property Division, based on comparative rents.

Resolved that approval be given to renew the current lease to let surplus office space at Oldbury Fire Station to the Oldbury Town Team, until 31st March 2008, at a cost of £3,500 per annum.

[The Clerk and Treasurer declared a personal interest in this item as employees of Sandwell MBC]

4/06 **Best Value Performance Indicators – Data for 2005/06 to 30th November 2005**

The Committee noted a report on the Brigade's performance against performance indicators contained in the Best Value Performance Plan for 2005/2006.

5/06 **General Income Write Offs**

The Committee noted the quarterly report of general income items written off as irrecoverable, up to the value of £1,000 for the period ending 31st December 2005.

6/06 **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 2006/2007. The Treasurer gave a presentation on the draft budget proposals.

Mr T Carroll from the Black Country Chamber of Commerce attended the meeting and addressed the Committee.

The Committee thanked Mr Carroll for attending and for his comments as part of the budget setting process.

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Resolved:-

- (1) that the representations and comments received be noted;
- (2) that a report on the budget and precept for 2006/2007 be submitted to the Authority on 13th February, 2006.

7/06 **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. 8/06 relates to the identity of a tenderer for the supply of goods or services;

Minutes Nos. 9/06 and 10/06 relate to terms proposed for the disposal/acquisition of property or the supply of good or services and disclosure would be likely to prejudice the Authority.

8/06 **Management and Monitoring of Hot and Cold Water Services**

Further to Minute No. 97/05 the Committee received a report following the analysis of the nine tenders opened for the above contract.

Members had requested that the tenders be analysed due to the significant difference between the estimated costs and the lowest tender received. However, it was reported that the estimated cost of £105,000 for the works had been based on the existing three-year contract and should have in fact been revised and based on a four year contract at £140,000.

The lowest tender received from Ewan Group Plc had been checked and found to meet the contract requirements. Favourable references had also been received from other Local Authorities.

Resolved that the tender submitted by Ewan Group Plc for the Management and Monitoring of Hot and Cold Water Systems, at a cost of £134,003 (plus VAT), being the lowest received, be accepted.

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9/06 **Proposed Vehicle Replacement Programme 2006/08**

It was reported that a review had recently been undertaken of the Brigade's Vehicle Replacement Programme (VRP). Approval was now sought to a proposed VRP for the financial period 2006/2008 and its associated procurement methods and timescales.

The proposed VRP identified that a total of 87 pump ladders were to be replaced over a 13 year period. In order to achieve this, it was proposed to purchase six appliances per year for 10 years and 9 appliances per year for 3 years.

It was reported that changes to legislation relating to commercial vehicle exhaust emissions were due to come into force in July 2006. In addition, the National Procurement Framework contract for pumping appliances, being set up through FiReBuy, was expected to be let in January 2007. In view of this, it was proposed to set the proposed VRP for pumping appliances over a two-year period, which would allow the Authority to let the contract based on the current emissions standards, utilising the current contract arrangements with the Fire Service Appliance Consortium (FSAC). The Committee noted that Standing Order 3.15(f) (Special Exceptions) applied in these circumstances.

It was also noted that the Government's recently published National Procurement Strategy (NPS), established by FiReBuy, set out a number of targets and key objectives to be met and stipulated that where Authorities were intending to let contracts after 1st April 2006 that were to continue beyond January 2007, they must obtain the agreement of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) before proceeding. The procurement of the 12 pump rescue ladders was specifically affected by this requirement.

The VRP also proposed the purchase of two prime movers and it was noted that these would be procured through the ODMP using the OGC contract conforming to the same specification as the previous contract placed in 2004/2005.

Resolved that, subject to any necessary approvals from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and FiReBuy, approval be given to the Brigade's Vehicle Replacement Programme (VRP) for the two year period 2006/2008, as now submitted.

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10/06 **New Fire Service Headquarters Site Proposals**

Further to Minutes Nos. 43/05 (23rd May 2005) and 66/05 (12th September 2005), the Committee considered a report setting out further options for the new Fire Service Headquarters (HQ) and associated operational and financial issues. The report re-iterated the reasons for the need to re-locate based on the condition of the current HQ buildings and the estimated costs of remedial works and indicated that negotiations to acquire premises identified as the preferred option in September 2005 had proved difficult.

The Authority's consultants, CBRE, had therefore proceeded to examine a further 18 sites during September and October 2005. Subsequently, four options had been identified, which included both existing premises and new build. Having considered the operational and financial considerations, Option B had been identified as the preferred site to develop a modern, high specification, purpose built HQ, with Option C being the site identified as the second preferred site.

Alternative locations had also been explored for the location of Fire Control pending the implementation of the West Midlands Regional Control Centre. It was recommended that the facility be re-located to Walsall Fire Station, at an estimated cost of £500,000.

The buildings that housed Aston Fire Station were also in need of some works and the opportunity had therefore been taken to consider re-locating the station to the proposed new HQ site.

It was reported that the Brigade had been informally notified that the current HQ building would be listed Grade II, however a formal written response from the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport was yet to be received. CBRE had been in discussions with Birmingham City Council regarding the potential value of the site and had proposed four options for the disposal of the site. The requirement to maintain a central fire station had been analysed by the Integrated Risk Management (IRM) team and had concluded that the two existing fire appliances and their crews based on the current HQ site could be re-located to alternative fire stations within the city of Birmingham.

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The Committee noted that the recommendations contained in the report would have an impact on the Authority's budget, which would be reflected in the three-year capital programme and the three year medium term financial plan. The Committee also noted the additional budget impact of remedial works that would be required to the current HQ if the relocation did not take place. It was reported that officers were in exploratory discussions with Advantage West Midlands (AWM), the Arc of Regeneration (AR) and Birmingham City Council (BCC) to determine if there was an opportunity to secure grant funding for elements of the project and other future requirements. A further report would be submitted on the outcomes of these negotiations.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Clerk be authorised to agree terms with the site developer for the provision of a new Fire Service Headquarters (FSHQ) building at the location now referred to as Option B, to a specification to be agreed;
- (2) that, subject to (1) above, and following a tender exercise, the Clerk be authorised to accept the best tender for consultancy support for the provision of the fitting out of the new FSHQ building;
- (3) that in the event of the preferred site not proceeding, the Clerk be instructed to proceed with the actions specified in (1) and (2) above in relation to Option C;
- (4) that approval be given to the capital and revenue funding packages relating to (1) to (3) above as now submitted;
- (5) that it be noted that the level of prudential borrowing approved by the Authority in September 2005 (Minute No. 66/05 refers) remains appropriate;
- (6) that with regard to the disposal of the current FSHQ building, approval be given for consultants CB Richard Ellis (CBRE), to make arrangements for a combination of an unconditional basis sale (Option 1) and subject to planning sale (Option 2) as detailed in their letter to the Authority dated 4th January 2006;

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- (7) that, subject to (1) and (3) above, approval be given to the disposal of the Brigade's Supplies and Stores, Oughton Road and the ICT Centre, Potterton Way and that the Chief Fire Officer appoint consultants to undertake this work to secure the maximum benefits for the Authority;
- (8) that Aston Fire Station/Fire Safety Centre be relocated to the new FSHQ, subject to a risk analysis being undertaken by the Integrated Risk Management (IRM) Team, that approval be given in principle to the disposal of the site and the Chief Fire Officer appoint consultants to undertake this work to secure the maximum benefits for the Authority and report back to the Committee in due course;
- (9) that, subject to (1) and (3) above, approval be given to the re-location of Fire Control to Walsall Fire Station pending the implementation of the West Midlands Regional Control Centre;
- (10) that it be noted that the proposals relating to the provision for fire cover from Central Fire Station form part of the Authority's proposed Integrated Risk Management Action Plan 3 for 2006/07.

(Meeting ended at 1.53 pm)

<p><i>Contact Officer: Stephnie Hancock Democratic Services Unit Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 0121-566-3189</i></p>
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