

Minutes of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

26th September 2005, at 11.00 a.m.
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: Councillors Birbeck, G Davies, S Davis, Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Foster, Hinton, Hogarth, Howard, Hussain, Idrees, Jones, Lawrence, Matchet, Pitt, Rogers, Ross, Ryder, Tagger, Underhill, Wallace and Ward.
Mr Topliss.

Apologies: Councillors Bowen, Jackson and Singh.

47/05 **Chair's Announcements**

Regional Control Centre

The Chair reported that several meetings had been held regarding the proposed Regional Control Centre and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister had now announced that the Control Centre for the West Midlands Region would be located in the Wolverhampton Business Park.

West Midlands Regional Management Board

The Chair announced that he had been elected Chair of the West Midlands Regional Management Board at its annual meeting on 26th July 2005.

The Chair also reported that since the Annual Meeting, he had hosted a number of meetings with officers of other Fire Authorities, and on 24th August, 2005, both the Fire Service Minister, Jim Fitzpatrick MP, and the Chief Constable of West Midlands Police had visited the Authority. The Chair had also attended various meetings in London on fire service matters.

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48/05 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 27th June 2005 be confirmed as a correct record.

49/05 **Automatic Fire Suppression Systems Policy**

Authority was sought to establish a policy with regard to the Brigade's stance on Automatic Fire Suppression (AFS) Systems (fire sprinklers, misting and gaseous suppression systems).

The installation of AFS systems was a significant means of protecting high risk groups and achieving Government targets for reduction of fire deaths and casualties. The provision of AFS systems also formed part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister strategy for the Home Fire Risk Check initiative.

Despite continued lobbying by the Fire Service for the installation of AFS systems, the cost of fire to society had dramatically risen in recent years. Schools were particularly vulnerable. In addition, the 2003 fire at the National Motorcycle Museum in Bickenhill had highlighted the need to protect heritage sites from the catastrophic effects of fire.

In light of the increasing role that fire suppression systems were likely to play in future, it was considered essential that the West Midlands Fire Service had a clear policy and guidance on their use.

Members supported this view, and urged the Chief Fire Officer to continue to lobby at a national level for legislation/regulation to make AFS systems mandatory in appropriate circumstances.

Resolved that approval be given to the West Midlands Fire Service policy statement on Automatic Fire Suppression Systems as now submitted.

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50/05 **Birmingham City Council's Second Generation Local Public Service Agreement**

The Authority was informed that a second Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA2) for Birmingham City Council had been agreed with Government and was in the process of being signed off by Ministers. Fire reduction was one of the themes within the agreement, covering accidental dwelling fires, vehicle arson and arson in buildings other than dwellings.

The fire reduction targets in the first Local Public Service Agreement had been achieved and a Performance Reward Grant (PRG) of £2.3m had been awarded to the City in recognition of this. A significant amount of this money had been allocated to fire reduction activity and the agreement and signing of the LPSA2 would see a pump priming grant of up to £120k being awarded to supplement fire reduction activity within the Birmingham area.

The Birmingham Fire Reduction Partnership (BFRP) had been established to ensure that these resources were used effectively and focused on achieving the LPSA2 targets. A fire service officer had been seconded, funded by the PRG, to manage the partnership.

Officers were confident that with the work of the BFRP and the organisation's strong focus on prevention-based activity, the targets set could be achieved, which would lead to a further PRG being awarded.

LPSAs were an integral part of Local Area Agreements, and as Birmingham City Council was one of the 2006 pilots, the West Midlands Fire Service would be in a strong position to participate and influence the future development of Local Area Agreements.

The knowledge gained from involvement in the LPSA process was being used to support Borough Commanders and influence the development of LPSAs in other local authorities.

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51/05 **Monitoring of Finances**

The Authority received a report on the monitoring of finances during 2005/06.

52/05 **Institution of Legal Proceedings**

Further to Minute No. 39/95, the Authority was informed that following the issue of summonses to a Coventry company for failure to comply with the Explosives Act, 1875, it had been found that the occupier of the premises at the time of the breach was not the same company upon whom the summons had been served.

After consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, legal proceedings had now been instituted in respect of Soundformat Limited for failure to comply with the Explosives Act, 1875.

53/05 **Outstanding Business**

The Authority received an update on items of business that were outstanding and an indication of when the items would be coming forward for consideration.

Reference was made to the need to bring forward urgently a report on the review of the constitution of the Joint Consultative Panel, following agreement with the trades unions involved with regard to representation on the Panel.

54/05 **West Midlands Regional Management Board**

The minutes of the meetings held on 10th June and 26th July 2005 were submitted.

Resolved that the acts, proceedings and recommendations of the West Midlands Regional Management Board, as set out in the minutes, be approved and adopted.

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55/05 **Minutes of the Executive Committee**

The minutes of the meetings held on 25th July and 12th September 2005, were received.

56/05 **Notes of the Policy Planning Forum**

The notes of the meetings held on 25th July and 12th September 2005 were received.

57/05 **Minutes of the Appeals Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th July 2005 were received.

58/05 **Minutes of the Disciplinary Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th July 2005 were received.

59/05 **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 relating to terms proposed for the disposal/acquisition of property or the supply of goods or services and disclosure would be likely to prejudice the Authority.

60/05 **Insurance Renewal 2005**

The Authority considered a report on its external insurance arrangements which were due for renewal on 1st October, 2005.

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Officers tabled a detailed analysis of the renewal premium information for 2005. It was explained that factors affecting the premium costs included the premium rate, changes in base information and contractual agreements. Insurance Premium Tax, a mandatory tax paid in respect of all premiums was currently set at 5%.

Officers confirmed that although it was not compulsory, it was intended to continue to insure the Authority against terrorism.

The recommended renewal premiums for 2005/2006 amounted to £575,171.87, which was a decrease of £24,593.51, compared to last year's figures.

The Chair thanked officers for their work in obtaining the best premium for the Authority and welcomed the saving on last year's premium.

Resolved that the Authority's insurance cover for the year commencing 1st October, 2005 be placed with insurers as set out in the Appendix to the report now circulated.

(Meeting ended at 11.35 am)

<i>Contact Officer: Stephnie Hancock Democratic Services Unit Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council</i>

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