

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

19 September, 2011 at 11.00 am
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: Councillors Alden, Ali Khan, Andrew, Chambers, Clinton, Davies, Davis, Delaney, Docker, Douglas-Maul, Edwards, Eustace, Finnegan, Foster, Griffiths, Hogarth, Idrees, Lines, O'Neill, Ryder, Singh, Spence, Stevenson, Tranter, Turner and Walsh.

Observers: Messrs Ager, Denny and Topliss.

Apologies: Councillor Sandy and the Chief Fire Officer.

58/11 **Declaration of Interests**

Councillors Edwards and O'Neill declared personal interests in Minute Nos 62/11(Statement of Accounts 2010/11) and 63/11 (Monitoring of Finances) below.

Reference was made to the late despatch of papers on this occasion. Every effort would be made to ensure that such delays did not occur in the future.

59/11 **Chair's and Chief Fire Officer's Announcements**

The Chair reported that West Midlands firefighters and young people had taken part in an 'appliance tow' that had been arranged as part of events to mark the receipt by the Authority of an award from the 2012 Olympics Inspire Programme for its community and youth engagement work. The former Olympic athlete David Moorcroft had been present at the event to encourage the participants.

He also reported that two fire service cadets aged eighteen and nineteen had climbed Snowdon carrying an extension ladder to raise

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funds for the Midland Ambulance and Firefighter Charity. They had raised £300 so far.

The Chair informed members that a handbook was available on the Committee Management Information System on the Authority's web site, for their reference. A hard copy was available in the Headquarters Library.

Members were also encouraged to make up to two visits to their local fire stations each quarter, and to complete an electronic or hard copy record of their visit and return it to Headquarters, marked for the attention of Alan Brandon, Director Corporate Services.

The Chair also reminded members of the following forthcoming events:

Fire Service Band Concert	8 October 2011 7 pm	Sutton Coldfield Town Hall
Brigade Carol Service	4 December 2011 4 pm	St Martin's Church, Bull Ring, Birmingham

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that a major exercise had been held over the weekend in which the Service had participated with great success, dealing with nine simulated incidents over a concurrent time. The Service had also dealt with 220 actual incidents over this period, including a serious fire in Kings Heath.

He informed the Authority that Andrew Brown of the Fire Safety Section had been awarded first class honours in his Fire Engineering degree, and had also been selected as the Best Fire Engineering Student 2011 and had produced the Best Dissertation 2011. Mr Brown was present at the meeting and was congratulated by Members on his achievements.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that the Service had dealt with 600 calls in 12 hours on 12 August 2011, on the occasion of the riot disturbances across the West Midlands. He thanked staff for all their efforts over this difficult period, often at great personal risk.

60/11 **Retirement of Deputy Chief Fire Officer**

The Chair informed Members that Martin Clark, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, would be retiring from the Service on 30th September, 2011. Mr Clark had completed 32 years service with the West Midlands Fire Service, working his way up the ranks from a firefighter to his current post. He had given sterling service to the Authority and to the communities of the West Midlands. He thanked Mr Clark for his personal help in settling into his own new role as Chair. He wished Mr Clark a long and happy retirement and best wishes for the future. He presented Mr Clark with a framed photograph of Headquarters.

Members of the Authority also paid tribute to Mr Clark.

Mr Clark replied that it had been a privilege to work with the Authority and officers of the Service, who were all committed to public service. He referred to the many successes of the Authority, in particular the reduction in fire incidents that had been achieved over the years.

The Chair indicated that a report would be brought to the October Executive Committee on the senior officer structure in the wake of Mr Clark's retirement.

61/11 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 June, 2011, be confirmed as a correct record.

62/11 **Annual Governance Report 2010/11**

The Annual Governance Report for 2010/11 produced by the Authority's external auditors was submitted for consideration. The Audit Commission Relationship Manager, John Gregory, attended the meeting and presented the report. The report set out a summary of the Audit Commission's findings from its audit work during 2010/11; a proposed action plan containing seven recommendations for improvement; and draft responses to each of the recommendations for approval by the Authority.

Mr Gregory indicated that since writing the report a further issue had been identified following late guidance on new dimension assets but

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this would not affect his opinion on the accounts.

It was the intention of the Auditor to issue an unqualified opinion on the Authority's financial statements and an unqualified value for money conclusion which would state that the Authority had proper arrangements in place to secure financial resilience, and proper arrangements for challenging how it secured economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The Authority was also required to approve a Letter of Representation, following which the Auditor would issue a final opinion and conclusion.

Mr Gregory dealt with questions from Members.

Resolved:

- (1) that the Annual Governance Report 2010/11 be received;
- (2) that the draft responses on behalf of the Authority to the Action Plan be approved, and that any necessary action be taken to rectify the matters now raised by the Auditor;
- (3) that the contents of the Letter of Representation be approved.

63/11 **Statement of Accounts 2010/11**

The Treasurer submitted the Authority's Statement of Accounts 2010/11 for approval. The Accounts had been adjusted in line with the requirements of the external auditor. A summary of the Statement of Accounts had also been produced and would be available on the Authority's web site, together with the full accounts.

Resolved that the Statement of Accounts 2010/11 as now submitted be approved.

64/11 **Monitoring of Finances**

The Authority noted a report on the monitoring of finances to the end of August 2011.

65/11

Collaboration with Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

The Authority was informed that discussions had taken place with Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority with regard to possible collaborative work for delivering fire control services in the future. These discussions had taken place in the light of the termination by Government of the development of regional fire control centres, and the release of funding to Fire and Rescue Authorities to help them to develop their own solutions for improving resilience and efficiency.

These preliminary discussions suggested that there was an opportunity to deliver improved resilience, enhanced technology and efficiencies through a shared service approach. It was proposed to develop this work through a joint project board.

Members welcomed this joint initiative which was an opportunity for mutual development of expertise on the use of technology which could benefit the whole service, as well as representing good value for money.

A further report on this matter would be brought to the next Executive Committee.

Resolved:

- (1) that the principle of working towards a joint arrangement for delivering fire control services between the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority and the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority be endorsed;
- (2) that the development of proposals for this arrangement by a joint Project Board comprising Members from both Authorities, to develop the overall strategy, supported by a joint officer Project Team, to identify, plan and implement the optimum solution, be approved;
- (3) that authority be delegated to the Executive Committee to approve the governance arrangements for the Project Board and the Project Team; to appoint Members of this Authority to the Project Board in accordance with those

arrangements; to oversee progress and receive regular reports from the Project Board; and to make recommendations to the Authority as necessary on the implementation of joint arrangements for delivering fire control services.

66/11 **Business Continuity Arrangements**

The Authority was reminded that it was a Category 1 responder as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, and was required to undertake contingency planning and to maintain plans to ensure that the organisation was able to continue to perform its functions in the event of an emergency. The Service had a team dedicated to business continuity planning and the arrangements that would apply in the event of an emergency occurring were outlined. The Chair of the Authority would be kept informed of events as part of these business continuity arrangements.

It was proposed to arrange specific briefings for Section 41 Members on the arrangements as they applied to their own authority. Briefings for individual Members could be provided by arrangement.

67/11 **Carbon Reduction Management Plan 2010/15**

The Authority was informed that the Service was taking part in the Carbon Trust's Carbon Management Programme. This involved the production of a five-year Carbon Management Plan to help reduce the organisation's carbon emissions and costs from energy usage. The Service target was to reduce carbon emissions by 25% by 2015 from the baseline year 2009/10. The carbon footprint of building stock had already been substantially reduced and targets for reducing gas and electricity consumption had been set to bring about further reductions. Expenditure of £2.5m had been allocated to the Carbon Reduction Management Plan which was an 'invest to save' programme. Energy savings would be realized towards 2015 and in future years. Without this initiative, energy costs and carbon emissions would continue to rise to the equivalent of 11,022 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent and an additional £2m in energy costs.

68/11 **Revised Operating Establishment of Rider Staff**

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the establishment of rider staff [staff providing operational cover from fire stations] had been reset with effect from 4 April 2011 from 1596 to 1500. This reduction had been brought about by natural wastage and the current recruitment freeze. Shift patterns were organized by reference to the current establishment figure less an allowance for leave, sickness and training [the strength]. The number of uniformed employees was continuing to fall and the strength had now fallen marginally below establishment. It was therefore necessary to reset the establishment to 1480. As a result, 24 posts aligned to the late shift on Green and White watch to provide resilience for the Orange and Purple Watch would be redistributed. This would maintain the Service's ability to provide current service standards and appliance availability. This arrangement would also have a beneficial effect on staffing around the Christmas period. The next re-set would need to take place in January 2012.

Members asked to be kept informed about operating establishment figures and any implications for the delivery of front line services. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer indicated that this matter was kept under constant review and proposals would be reported to the Authority in due course on a possible alternative mechanism for operational cover, as outlined at a recent Policy Planning Forum.

69/11 **Result of recent fire safety prosecution**

The Chief Fire Officer reported that a prosecution had been brought against Mr Pervaiz Khan in respect of breaches of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 at a house in multiple occupation at 257 Birmingham Road, Walsall. Mr Khan was convicted in July 2011 on five charges, was fined £9,000 and ordered to pay costs of £8,166.

70/11 **Annual Report of the Audit and Performance Management Committee**

Councillor Turner presented the Annual Report of the Audit and Performance Management Committee for 2010/11.

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Resolved that the Annual Report be received.

71/11 **Minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee**

The minutes of the meetings held on 5 September, 2011 were received.

72/11 **Minutes of the Executive Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 September, 2011 were received, subject to the correction of the report of the Lead Member for Human Resources to indicate that a visit was being arranged for Members of the Authority to see the services offered by the West Midlands Fire Service Training Academy.

73/11 **Notes of the Policy Planning Forum**

The notes of the meetings held on 4 and 18 July and 5 September, 2011 were received. It was noted that Councillor Lines had submitted an apology for the meeting held on 18 July and had been present at the meeting held on 5 September.

74/11 **Notes of the Joint Consultative Panel**

The notes of the meeting held on 5 September, 2011 were received.

75/11 **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 relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information); and relating 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.

76/11 **Update on the Review of the Pay and Grading Structure**

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the Employee Relations Team had been working with stakeholders to consider proposals relating to a new pay and grading structure. A proposed pay and grading structure was submitted, together with an overview of a proposed integrated performance management and pay grading system. The new system directly linked with the performance management framework and would provide critical information on individual, team and department contributions to the overall objectives. The system would also support the application of the Service's restructure, redeployment and redundancy processes by creating more generic roles. Consultation with the trades unions would commence in September 2011 with a view to implementing the new structure with effect from 2 April 2012.

Reference was made to the threat of national industrial action by trades unions over proposed changes to pension arrangements for public sector employees. The Chair indicated that this matter was being monitored and that discussions would take place with Section 41 Members on contingency plans in the event of industrial action. Members would be kept informed of developments in this matter.

77/11 **Review of Allowances and Expenses**

The Chief Fire Officer reported that as part of the Building upon Success programme, a review of allowances and expenses payable to staff had been undertaken and potential areas for savings had been identified. This would ensure that allowances were affordable and reasonable in the current climate and would support the value for money strategy, a harmonized approach to allowances and improved service efficiency.

Resolved:

- (1) that the Chief Fire Officer be authorised to review the full range of allowances and expenses paid within the West Midlands Fire Service;
- (2) that the commencement of consultation, and where appropriate, negotiation, with the trades unions on the proposals for review of allowances and expenses be

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authorised;

- (3) that a further report be submitted to the Authority following the conclusion of the review with appropriate recommendations.

78/11 Contract Awards Summary January to August 2011

In accordance with procurement standing orders, the Chief Fire Officer submitted details of contracts in excess of £100,000 awarded between January and August 2011.

79/11 Insurance Arrangements

The Treasurer and Chief Fire Officer submitted a report setting out proposals for the renewal of the Authority's external insurance arrangements to apply with effect from 1 October 2011. These proposals had been drawn up in consultation with a specialist insurance broker. It had been possible to negotiate a reduction on the previous year's annual insurance premium.

Resolved that insurance arrangements be made with insurers as now reported and as set out in the appendix to the report.

(Meeting ended at 12.35 pm)

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