

Minutes of the Executive Committee

**4 February, 2013, at 10.00am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham**

Present: Councillor Edwards (Chair);
Councillor Idrees (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Aston, Clinton, Davies, Davis,
Douglas-Maul, Finnegan, Foster and O'Neill.

1/13 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 December, 2012, be approved as a correct record.

2/13 Firefighters' Pension Scheme

Approval was sought to West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority's (WMFRA) response to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) consultation document on the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (1992) and New Firefighters' Pension Scheme (2006). The consultation sought views on the proposed increase to employee contribution rates from 1 April, 2013.

The DCLG had undertaken consultation with key stakeholders, including Employer and Union representatives, through the Firefighters' Pensions Committee, as well as other interested parties, where contribution increases had been discussed.

The DCLG had confirmed that the consultation complied with the Code of Practice on Consultation.

It was noted that the impact of the proposed changes would affect all members of the pension schemes, in particular, more men than women due to the service employing more men in firefighting roles.

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WMFRA was of the view that the greatest risk of opt out from the firefighters' pension scheme would come from pay bands £21,000 to £40,000.

Monitoring of drop out rates of the pension scheme would continue to be monitored by both WMFRA and Communities and Local Government, however, it was felt that increases to the pension scheme should be phased in.

Resolved: That the response to the consultation document from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG): Firefighters' Pension Scheme (1992) and New Firefighters' Pension Scheme (2006) – proposed increases to employee contribution rates effective from 1 April 2013, be endorsed.

3/13

Member Development

Approval was sought to the following proposals to further establish, continue and improve the training and development process for elected members:

- **Constitution** – work was currently taking place regarding the development of a West Midlands Fire Authority Constitution to replace and enhance the current terms of reference and delegations agreed annually by the Fire Authority. The role and responsibility of elected members with regard to member development would be set out within the revised constitution;
- **Quarterly Performance Management Meetings** – an existing programme of performance management meetings was established within the service. Regular updates on elected member development would be reported to Scrutiny Committee meetings for consideration;
- **Scrutiny Committee** – following the receipt of reports from the Quarterly Performance Management Meetings, it was proposed that the Scrutiny Committee would make recommendations to the Executive Committee on identified opportunities for development activities;

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- **Policy Planning Forums** – it was proposed that these continue to be used as an opportunity to provide briefings/ updates/master classes;
- **Induction Process** – the existing process was to be reviewed and updated. Additional emphasis would be given to the importance of station visits and personal development reviews;
- **Strategy Document for Supporting and Developing Members** – it was proposed that the existing document was revised and updated reflecting the recommendations as now proposed.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the role and responsibilities of elected members with regard to member development be set out within the West Midlands Fire Authority's Constitution;
- (2) that regular updates on elected member development are reported to the quarterly performance management meetings;
- (3) that following the receipt of reports from the quarterly performance management meetings, the Scrutiny Committee makes recommendations to the Executive Committee on identified opportunities for member development activities;
- (4) that Policy Planning Forums continue to be used as an opportunity to provide briefings, updates and master classes;
- (5) that the existing member induction process be reviewed and updated and that additional emphasis be given to the importance of station visits and personal development reviews;

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- (6) that the existing Strategy for Supporting and Developing Members document be revised and updated to reflect the decisions set out above.

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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 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).

5/13

West Midlands Fire Service Business Safety Limited

The Committee received an update on the activities of West Midlands Fire Service Business Safety Limited since its inception in February, 2012.

The Company's Board of Directors had felt that in order for the Company to continue and become a success, it would require a business development plan and dedicated officer resource. Any new company resource would need to be funded. The Authority, on 13 February 2012, had authorised a loan to the company (on commercial terms) which was intended to be accessed as a draw-down facility to meet appropriate expenditure, particularly in the early life of the company when cash flow had not been established.

Having considered what the company's requirements were in terms of the officer resource, the Board decided that two posts would be needed to provide the level of expertise and coverage required to develop the Company's products and actively market them.

These two posts would be a lead Business Development Manager, and an Assistant Marketing Manager. These appointments would be twelve months fixed term, with a review after six months and a possibility to extend.

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Approval was now sought to draw down a proportion of the loan previously approved by the Authority in order to fund the two officer support posts.

Whilst the Committee was minded to approve the proposals, they felt that the status of the loan should be reviewed in six months time in order to minimise the risk of it not being recovered and that the loan should be drawn down on a cash flow basis and not in a lump sum. In addition, it was felt that the terms of the loan should be agreed between the Authority and the Company, on commercial terms.

In relation to concerns regarding the possibility of seconding internal employees into the two proposed posts, due to the reduction in workforce, the Committee was advised that the type of skills required for one of the posts was not available in-house as it was more of a commercial role. However, it was envisaged that at least one appointment could be expected to be made from within the WMFS workforce if it was of an administrative nature.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the recent actions of West Midlands Fire Service Business Safety Limited be endorsed;
- (2) that the West Midlands Fire Service Business Safety Limited be authorised to draw down a proportion of the loan previously agreed by the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority, in order to fund two officer support posts and this be drawn on a cashflow basis and not in a lump sum ;
- (3) that the terms of the loan referred to in Resolution (2) above, be agreed by the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority and the West Midlands Fire Service Business Safety Limited company, on commercial terms;

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- (4) that the progress of the loan referred to in Resolution (2) above be reviewed in six months time and a further report on progress to be submitted to the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority at the end of the financial year.

(The meeting ended at 10.30am)

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