

<p>Minutes of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority</p>
--

14th February, 2011, at 11.00 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Hinton (Chairman);
Councillor Eustace (Vice-Chairman);
Councillors Alden, Andrew, Chambers, Clinton,
Delaney, Docker, Douglas-Maul, Foster, A Hill,
M Hill, Hodgson, Idrees, Jackson, Jones, Mulhall,
O'Neill, Ryder, Singh, Spence, Stevenson, Tagger
and Walsh.

Apologies: Councillors Davies and Turner and Bennett;
Messrs Ager, Denny and Topliss.

1/11 **Declaration of interests**

Councillor O'Neill declared a personal interest in Minute No 6/11 below (Monitoring of Finances).

2/11 **Chair's Announcements**

The Chairman reported that capital funding of £2.9m had been allocated to the Authority as part of the 2011/12 financial settlement. This was greater than what had been anticipated, but would have no impact on the disappointing revenue settlement.

He also reported that arrangements had been made for local Members of Parliament, James Morris and Lorely Burt, to visit Headquarters in the near future.

He had attended a meeting of the Association of Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Authorities on 8th February, 2011, to discuss the approach to lobbying Government for improved grant in years 3 and 4 of the current financial settlement.

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority – 14th February 2011

A meeting would also be taking place shortly with a representative of the Local Government Association with regard to the level of services received by the Authority in return for its subscription, and a further report on this matter would be submitted to the Authority in due course.

Chairs and Chief Fire Officers from the wider West Midlands Region would be holding one of their regular meetings later that afternoon.

3/11 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 29th November, 2010, be confirmed as a correct record.

4/11 The Plan 2011-15

The Authority considered a report setting out a draft Preferred Vision, Key Priorities and Strategic Objectives which would form the basis of the refresh of 'The Plan' for the period 2011-15. These had been arrived at following discussions at the Policy Planning Forum and consultation with Fire Service managers, stakeholders and service users. The Plan and the Building upon Success programme, which was the vehicle for delivering the strategic objective of value for money, fulfilled the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework regarding the publication of an Integrated Risk Management Plan. The Plan, once approved, would be published on the Authority's web site.

Resolved that the Preferred Vision, Key Priorities and Strategic Objectives, as now submitted, be approved for inclusion in the Plan 2011-15.

5/11 Budget and Precept 2011/12 and Budget Forecast 2012/13 to 2014/15

The Authority considered a report on the Capital Programme for 2011/12 to 2014/15, the prudential indicators relating to the Authority's capital financing requirements, the Treasury

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority – 14th February 2011

Management Strategy, the revenue budget and the consequent precept level and resultant amount payable by each constituent District Council.

The Comprehensive Spending Review announced in October 2010 included a reduction of 25% in grant funding for fire and rescue authorities over a four year period with the largest proportion of the reduction occurring in years 3 and 4 of the current settlement. Additional grant would be made available in this and the next financial year to authorities who delivered a voluntary council tax freeze. It was not proposed to increase the precept to district councils in 2011/12 so as to benefit from this grant, but it was unlikely that the grant would be forthcoming after the current four-year Comprehensive Spending Review period, and the Authority would need to make up any shortfall.

The settlement for this Authority for 2011/2013 represented an overall reduction in funding of more than 12% over the two years. Capital resources under the financial settlement for 2011/12 were more generous than had been anticipated.

A revised table indicating income from external funding sources against expenditure was tabled. Total expenditure in 2011/12 was now estimated to be £111,502, as Council Tax freeze grant was to be treated as income. Revised recommendations taking into account the latest information with regard to the grant settlement were also tabled.

The Treasurer gave assurances in accordance with sections 25-27 of the Local Government Act 2003 that the budget preparation had been robust and that the level of reserves was sustainable and sufficient.

Members expressed concern about the substantial reductions in government grant, the implications of the backloading of the impact of the reductions and the inequitable nature of the settlement for metropolitan fire authorities. The Chairman and Chief Fire Officer indicated that lobbying would take place in the next six months with a view to negotiating an improved settlement for the third and fourth year of the current Comprehensive Spending Review.

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority – 14th February 2011

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Authority's Revenue Budget for 2011/2012 of £111.502m, as now submitted, be approved;
- (2) that the Authority's capital programme for 2011/2012 to 2014/2015, as now submitted, be approved;
- (3) that the Authority's Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators, as now submitted, be approved;
- (4) that it be noted that the constituent District Councils have formally set their Council Tax bases for the year 2011/2012 in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 made under Section 33(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as follows:-

	Tax Base
Birmingham	298,292.00
Coventry	89,027.00
Dudley	98,313.96
Sandwell	85,772.50
Solihull	79,806.00
Walsall	78,707.79
Wolverhampton	<u>71,023.40</u>
	<u>800,942.95</u>

- (5) that the following amounts be now calculated by the Authority for the year 2011/2012, in accordance with Sections 43 to 48 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:-
 - (i) £115,505,000 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 43(2)(a) to (d) of the Act;
 - (ii) £4,003,000 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 43(3)(a) to (b) of the

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority – 14th February 2011

Act;

- (iii) £111,502,000 being the amount by which the aggregate at (i) above exceeds the aggregate at (ii) above calculated by the Authority in accordance with Section 43(4) of the Act as its budget requirement for the year;
- (iv) £73,193,000 being the aggregate of the sums which the Authority estimates will be payable for the year into its general fund in respect of formula grant by the aggregate of the sums which the Authority estimates will be received in the year from the constituent District Councils in respect of amounts they have estimated as the surplus on their collection funds for 2010/2011;
- (v) £47.83 being the amount at (iii) above less the amount at (iv) above all divided by the total amount at (4) above, calculated by the Authority in accordance with Section 44(1) of the Act as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year;

(vi)	<u>Valuation Bands</u>	£ (to 6 decimals)	£ (rounded to 2 decimals)
	A	31.886667	31.89
	B	37.201111	37.20
	C	42.515556	42.52
	D	47.830000	47.83
	E	58.458889	58.46
	F	69.087778	69.09
	G	79.716667	79.72
	H	95.660000	95.66

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (v) above by the number which in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority – 14th February 2011

in valuation band D, calculated by the Authority in accordance with Section 47(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

- (vii) that the following precepts be issued to the seven charging authorities in the West Midlands:-

	£
Birmingham City Council	14,267,306
Coventry City Council	4,258,176
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	4,707,357
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	4,102,498
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	3,817,121
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council	3,764,593
Wolverhampton City Council	<u>3,397,049</u>
Total	<u>38,309,100</u>

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (v) above by the appropriate tax base at (4) above in accordance with section 48(2) of the Act, as the amount of precept payable by each constituent District Council;

- (7) that the precept for each District Council as calculated at (vii) above be issued in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

6/11 Monitoring of Finances

The Authority noted a report on the monitoring of finances up to the end of December 2010.

7/11 Localism Bill

The Authority received a report setting out the main provisions of the Localism Bill which was likely to receive Royal Assent later this year. There were specific implications for Fire and

Rescue Authorities, which would be given wider general powers to deliver their purpose and a less restrictive charging regime. The bill also included a provision which would widen the scope for members to participate in decision making when they had expressed pre-determined positions; a duty to promote and maintain high standards of member conduct whilst replacing the existing national code of conduct with the option to adopt a local voluntary code; the abolition of the Standards Board for England; and a requirement to publish a senior pay policy statement relating to the remuneration of chief officers and their deputies.

Members considered possible areas on which the Authority might lobby for changes to the Bill. It was noted that two of the constituent authorities could be subject to the provisions of the Bill relating to elected mayors and this could have implications for the accountability of members of the Authority, which might need to be addressed in the legislation. The future of partnership working was also identified as an issue of concern.

The provisions of the Bill would be the subject of a presentation to the Policy Planning Forum in due course where these issues could be explored further.

8/11

Revision to Procurement Standing Order

The Authority received a report proposing a number of amendments to Procurement Standing Orders relating to the process for the opening of tenders; retrospective reporting of the award of contracts; responsibility for approval of quotations other than the lowest between £3,000 and £29,999; and responsibility for the approval of exemptions to standing orders for contracts under £30,000. Consequent amendment of the terms of reference of the Executive Committee would also be necessary.

Resolved:

- (1) that the revised procurement procedures be approved, subject to the retention in paragraph 2.11.8 [submission, opening and registration of formal tenders] of the reference to the Chairman [or his nominee] being present at the opening of

formal tenders [version incorporating this amendment attached as Appendix 1];

- (2) that the revised terms of reference for the Executive Committee now set out as Appendix 2 be approved.

9/11

2011/12 Property Asset Management Plan

The Authority considered a proposed Property Asset Management Plan for 2011/12 which had been drawn up to ensure the effective and efficient use of the Authority's land and buildings.

Resolved that the 2011/12 Property Asset Management Plan as now submitted be approved.

10/11

Disposal of Decommissioned Fire Appliances

The Authority was informed that at present there was a delegation to the Chief Fire Officer to dispose of up to two decommissioned fire appliances each year under the terms of the West Midlands Fire Service Overseas Aid Policy. This practice had been reviewed in the light of budget reductions facing the Authority and the increasing value of such appliances on the open market in the United Kingdom as a result of their high specification and maintenance history. It was now proposed to dispose of decommissioned appliances on the open market to maximize income to the Service.

Resolved:

- (1) that authority be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Treasurer, to dispose of decommissioned fire appliances on the open market;
- (2) that all references to the donation of fire appliances be deleted from paragraph 4.10 of the scheme of delegation (provision of aid outside the UK).

11/11 **National Resilience Assurance Team Review of WMFS
Urban Search and Rescue Team**

The Authority was informed that an assurance review of the Service's Urban Search and Rescue Team had been carried out recently by the National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT) which provided the Secretary of State with independent assurance that the various capabilities deployed across England were at the required state of preparedness and readiness. The assessment report indicated that the USAR Team operated to exceptionally high standards, referring to the commitment of the Service to national resilience, innovative practice, and a culture of continual development and high professional standards.

Members congratulated the officers concerned on this excellent assessment.

12/11 **Attendance at a Seminar**

The Authority noted an urgent decision made by the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Authority, to approve the attendance of three members of the Authority at a seminar in Lancashire held on 6th January 2011, for the purpose of claiming travel and subsistence allowances.

Members reported back on the seminar which had explored different crewing models.

13/11 **Minutes of the Executive Committee**

The minutes of the meetings held on 10th and 24th January, 2011 were received.

Resolved that the recommendations set out in Minute No 27/10 (Clerk to the Authority) be approved.

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority – 14th February 2011

14/11 Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

The notes of the meeting held on 24th January, 2011 were received.

With reference to Note 5/11 (Fire Fatalities) the Chief Fire Officer referred to a further incident on 11th February 2011 which had resulted in a further fatality in an accidental fire in a dwelling. Investigations were continuing with partner agencies to establish the circumstances around the incidents and any lessons to be learned.

15/11 Minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee

The minutes of the meetings held on 29th November, 2010 and 10th January, 2011 were received.

It was noted that Councillor Clinton had been present at the meeting held on 29th November 2010 and had submitted an apology for the meeting held on 10th January 2011.

16/11 Notes of the Joint Consultative Panel

The notes of the meeting held on 10th January 2011 were received.

17/11 Notes of the Member Development Working Group

The notes of the meeting held on 29th November, 2010 were received.

Resolved that the recommendations set out in Note 17/10 (Member Development Charter) and Note 18/10 (Member Role Descriptions) be approved.

18/11

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 and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

19/11

Planned Procurement Exercises for 2010/11

Further to Paragraph 2.11 of Standing Order 1/8 (Procurement Procedures), the Chief Fire Officer submitted a report setting out the rationale for procurement, the proposed route to market and the funding provisions in respect of a number of tender exercises.

Resolved that approval be given to proceed with the following tender exercises in respect of the commission of various works and the acquisition of goods and services to the Authority during 2010/11:

Gas and electricity supply
Window and door upgrades
Replacement of internal and external light fittings and improved controls
Annual ICT hardware and associated software refresh
Provision of an Occupational Health Physician Service
Provision of a Child Care Voucher Scheme
Waste and Recycling Service
Emergency Lighting and Maintenance Contract
2011/13
Security Guarding Services
Uniform
Smoke alarms and smoke alarms for the hearing impaired
End of Life Vehicles
Diesel Fuel
Foam

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority – 14th February 2011

Heating Oil
High Pressure Lifting Equipment
Holmatro Cutting Equipment
Thermal Imaging Cameras
Electrical rewiring contract
Proposed Boiler Replacements
Construction of Training at Height Facilities
Command Support Vehicles

(Meeting ended at 12 noon)

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