

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

**20<sup>th</sup> September 2010 at 11.00 am**  
**at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham**

**Present:** Councillor Hinton (Chairman);  
Councillor Eustace (Vice-Chairman);  
Councillors Bennett, Chambers, Clinton, Davies,  
Delaney, Docker, Douglas-Maul, Foster, A Hill,  
M Hill, Idrees, Jackson, Jones, Mulhall, O'Neill,  
Ryder, Spence, Stevenson, Tagger, Turner, Walsh  
and R Whitehouse;  
Mr Denny and Mr Topliss.

**Apology:** Councillor Alden

54/10 **Declaration of interests**

Councillor O'Neill declared a personal interest in Minute No 58/10 below (Monitoring of Finances).

55/10 **Chairs Announcements**

The Chairman informed the Authority that the Road Traffic Collision Extrication Team from Northfield had recently competed in the World Rescue Challenge in County Cork, Ireland. The team took second place in the World RTC Extrication Challenge and the Officer in Charge category and third place in the Medic category. The Chair on behalf of the Authority congratulated all those involved on another excellent result.

The Chairman reminded Members that arrangements had been made for them to visit Safeside at the conclusion of this meeting.

The Chairman indicated that he had arranged for members of Sandwell Council to visit Fire Service Headquarters and

## **West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2010**

Safeside and that the visit had been very successful. A similar invitation had been extended to Members of other constituent districts on 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2010, but the response had been disappointing. He requested Section 41 members to encourage attendance at this event by members of their Councils.

The Chairman and Chief Fire Officer also expressed disappointment at the level of attendance of elected members, Members of Parliament and the press at a Showcase Day held on 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2010. The purpose of the event was to publicise the wide range of functions carried out by the West Midlands Fire Service and to demonstrate value for money from the precept. The staff involved with the event were disappointed with the take up. Alternative arrangements were now to be made to put on showcase events in each of the constituent districts and Section 41 members were asked to assist with the arrangements for their district.

### 56/10 **Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 28th June, 2010, be confirmed as a correct record.

### 57/10 **Annual Governance Report 2009/2010**

The Authority received the Annual Report of Governance for 2009/10. John Gregory of the Audit Commission attended the meeting to present the report. He indicated that he intended to issue an unqualified opinion on the Authority's accounts. The two outstanding matters referred to in his report had been satisfactorily resolved. One further minor error had been identified late in the audit process relating to bad debt on council tax which was too complex to correct in the 2009/10 accounts.

He also intended to issue an unqualified opinion on value for money and indicated that there was positive evidence of continuous development of practices within the Authority.

Mr Gregory referred to the anticipated changes for the Audit Commission arising from new legislation but indicated that it was likely that his team would continue to deliver external audit

## **West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2010**

services to the Authority for the remainder of the term of their appointment.

**Resolved** that the contents of the draft letter of representation be agreed.

### 58/10 **Monitoring of Finances**

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

### 59/10 **Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008/11**

The Authority was advised that the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008/11 set out the Government's expectations for the Service and what was required of Fire and Rescue Authorities [FRAs] to meet those expectations.

The requirements placed upon FRAs by the National Framework had now been revised by Government and the following aspects of the National Framework would no longer be enforced:

- Regional Management Boards
- Equality and Diversity
- Workforce Development
- Asset Management

The implications of these revisions were being considered and further reports would be submitted in due course. The Lead Member for Equality and Diversity indicated that she was already working with officers with a view to bringing a report in the near future.

### 60/10 **Proposed Dissolution of the West Midlands Regional Management Board**

Further to Minute No 59/10 above, the Authority was advised that the West Midlands Regional Management Board met on 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2010. The Board was in favour of dissolution by a target date of 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2010. The Board was keen to

## West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2010

encourage continued informal joint working between Fire and Rescue Authorities.

The West Midlands Regional Management Board recommended to the region's Fire and Rescue Authorities that they agree to dissolve the West Midlands Regional Management Board and that they give delegated powers to their Chief Fire Officers, in consultation with the Chairs of Authorities, to take all necessary steps to achieve the dissolution of the West Midlands Regional Management Board at the earliest practical date, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State.

It was confirmed that the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State had now confirmed in writing that the proposal to dissolve the West Midlands Regional Management Board was in accordance with his announcement on 28<sup>th</sup> July, 2010 that the Secretary of State no longer expected to enforce the requirement of the National Framework to act regionally through Regional Management Boards.

Members were in favour of the dissolution of the Regional Management Board but indicated that it had been a useful forum for partnership working and had produced savings and improvements for constituent authorities. The importance of continued partnership working and the opportunities for more flexibility in this regard were emphasised. Regional links between Chairs and Chief Fire Officers would continue informally.

### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that the Authority agrees to the dissolution of the West Midlands Regional Management Board:
- (2) that in pursuance of (1) above, the Chief Fire Officer and Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, be given delegated power to take all necessary steps to achieve the dissolution of the West Midlands Regional Management Board at the earliest practical date.

## **West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2010**

The Authority was informed that Mr A Rehman, the owner of a house in multiple occupation at 232/234 Highfield Road, Washwood Heath, Birmingham, had been prosecuted following a fire at the premises on 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2007. The defendant was convicted of 18 charges relating to breaches of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) 2005 Order and was sentenced to four months imprisonment suspended for 12 months on all 18 charges to run concurrently; 150 hours unpaid community work on all charges to run concurrently; and ordered to pay costs of £10,435.

### 62/10 **Minutes of the Executive Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2010 were received.

### 63/10 **Notes of the Policy Planning Forum**

The notes of the meetings held on 12<sup>th</sup> July and 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2010 were received.

### 64/10 **Minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2010 were received.

### 65/10 **Minutes of the Standards Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2010 were received.

## West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2010

### 66/10 Notes of the Joint Consultative Panel

The notes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2010 were received.

**Resolved** that in connection with the recommendation set out in Minute No 7/10 (Lessons learned from the failure to consult concerning the replacement of non-corporate furniture on fire stations) the amendment of the constitution of the Joint Consultative Panel to clarify that the employer's side makes recommendations to the Service or Authority, as appropriate, be approved.

### 67/10 Minutes of the West Midlands Regional Management Board

The minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2010 were received.

**Resolved** that the acts, proceedings and recommendations of the Board be approved and adopted.

### 68/10 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).

### 69/10 Review of Charges to other Fire and Rescue Services for Assistance under Section 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

The Chief Fire Officer reported that a review of charges to other Fire and Rescue Services for assistance under Section

## West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2010

16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 had been undertaken as it had become apparent that the current rate of charge did not reflect the level of resources deployed by the Service.

It was proposed to introduce a revised scale of charges based on the rate for special service calls (currently £336) per appliance/hour with an hourly rate (£46.20) for officers. The Chief Fire Officer intended to enter into discussions with neighbouring Fire Services on this basis. The discussions would also cover the types of incidents which the Service would reasonably respond to and the possibility of innovative practice to assist neighbouring authorities to carry their duties in the most cost effective way. The Authority would be kept informed of developments in this matter.

**Resolved** that the actions of the Chief Fire Officer in this matter be endorsed.

(Meeting ended at 11.55 pm)

*Contact Officer: Mandeep Kaur  
Democratic Services Unit  
Sandwell MBC  
0121-569-3261*