

Minutes of the Executive Committee

**9th December, 2013, at 10.00 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham**

Present: Councillor Edwards (Chair);
Councillor Idrees (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Aston, Davis, Douglas-Maul, Finnegan,
O'Reilly, Quinnen and Shackleton.

Apology: Councillor Foster.

Observers: Councillors Atwal, Chambers, Collingswood, Hogarth,
Mottram JP, Singh, Spence, Tranter, Walsh and
Young;
Mr Ager.

15/13 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th June, 2013, be approved as a correct record.

16/13 **Member Development**

Further to Minutes Nos. 3/13 and 13/13, members received an update on the progress which had been made on proposals to strengthen the member development process. Of the six recommendations made by the Committee in February, 2013, four had been implemented. The remaining two proposals included the provision of updates on member development to the Quarterly Performance Management Meetings. Following the receipt of these updates it was intended that the Scrutiny Committee would make recommendations regarding member development activities to this Committee.

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In addressing the findings of the Operational Assessment for 2013 Peer Challenge and providing continued commitment to the Investors in People standard, there had been notable improvements made in other areas of member development where take up of activities had increased.

The Authority had delivered its first in-house leadership development day, facilitated by the Local Government Association. This was the first collaborative regional FRA event where invitation to attend was extended to Elected Members from Staffordshire FRA. It was intended that this would be the start of future collaborative learning events.

The Personal Development Review (PDR) process had been enhanced to encourage more emphasis on the development conversation. The increased use of telephone PDRs had also enabled these discussions to take place at mutually convenient times, allowing greater accessibility and reducing travel time. The outcomes of these reviews would help inform the training and development plan which would be available January 2014.

Structured station visits were being encouraged by officers and in terms of future developments there was an opportunity to explore the benefit of new Members to the Authority being assigned a 'buddy' to aid their induction to the Fire Authority.

Members welcomed the opportunity to visit fire stations and the information which was supplied to them prior to such visits. Officers requested that members return their feedback forms in order that members' visits to stations were recorded.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the update provided on Elected Member development be noted;
- (2) that regular updates on Elected Member development be reported to the Quarterly Performance Management meetings;

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- (3) that following the receipt of reports from the Quarterly Performance Management meetings, the Scrutiny Committee make recommendations to the Executive Committee on any identified opportunities for member development activities.

17/13

Public Consultation Review of the Community Safety Strategy 2013 - 2016 – Interim Recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

The Committee received the findings and interim recommendations of a review undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee on the Public Consultation of the Community Strategy 2013 - 2016.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee reported that an interim report had been agreed for there were a few areas which required some further work to be completed and that this should be done by spring 2014. He emphasised that although members had been disappointed with the level of public feedback to the consultation, this percentage was higher than most other authorities. The Committee felt, however, that the Authority could undertake actions to increase response to future consultations.

Members commented that perhaps efforts should be made to make the public more aware of all the preventative and partnership work the Service was engaged with, to eliminate the general conception that firefighters only “put out fires”. It was felt that many of the recommendations from the previous Scrutiny review which related to the promotion of the Safeside facility, particularly through Section 41 members and liaison with schools, could also be used to further promote the Service and its preventative and partnership working. Officers also reported on initiatives which would bring “The Plan” to life and get “Our Story” told to the public. Marmot accreditation, if achieved, would also strengthen credibility and promote the wider working of the Service.

Members asked to receive copies of the brochure/paperwork which would assist them to make schools in their areas aware of the Service and the Safeside facility.

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Resolved that the interim recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee in relation to the Public Consultation Review of the Community Safety Strategy 2013 - 2016, as contained within the Appendix, be approved.

18/13 **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 any individual and 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.

19/13 **Shared Fire Control Project – Full Solution Assimilation of Staff**

The Committee received a report on the implications of proposals to assimilate the existing West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) employees into the Shared Fire Control full solution staffing model. The proposals had been approved by the Shared Fire Control Governance Board on 5th December, 2013.

The Shared Fire Control full solution staffing model proposed to combine all Watch Manager positions in a single pool of 14 Watch Managers and one temporary role in a Project Team. Currently 18 Watch Managers were in post between both Services. It was anticipated therefore that at the point of cutover in April 2014, there was likely to be a genuine redundancy situation and in such circumstances it was a statutory duty to consult with the Trade Unions and Representative Bodies to mitigate against the need for compulsory redundancies.

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Initially all affected employees would be invited to express an interest for Voluntary Redundancy (VR). Should the number of requests for VR exceed the number of employees by which there is a need to reduce the pool, then a process for considering and deciding such requests would be undertaken.

Resolved that the commencement of consultation with the recognised Trade Unions and Representative Bodies on mitigation for any compulsory redundancies within Fire Control be approved.

(The meeting ended at 10.55 am)

Contact Officer: Rosemary Jones Democratic Services Unit Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 0121 569 3896

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Appendix

Public Consultation Review of the Community Safety Strategy 2013 – 2016
Interim Recommendations

Recommendation		Responsible Officer/Member
1.	To create awareness of the stakeholder analysis project and desired outcomes with key internal stakeholders such as Operations Commanders, the Community Safety Team and key frontline personnel.	Community Safety, Corporate Communications
2.	To identify the existing stakeholder engagement with community groups and third sector organisations throughout the Command areas and to map against the demographic profile and vulnerable people profile.	Community Safety, Equality and Diversity
3.	To ascertain the quality of stakeholder engagement and to consider if this is proportionately appropriate with regards to the demographic profile and needs of that community group.	Equality and Diversity, Corporate Communications
4.	That where there is a gap in intelligence in relation to stakeholder engagement, to establish contact and ascertain the needs of the community and determine whether these needs align with West Midlands Fire Service's objectives set out in 'The Plan'.	Community Safety, Equality and Diversity, Corporate Communications
5.	To identify any gaps that the Service needs to consider with regard to their community engagement and to provide recommendations for Area Commanders to consider.	Community Safety, Corporate Communications

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Recommendation		Responsible Officer/Member
6.	That Area Commanders work with the Equality and Diversity and Corporate Communications Teams in order to determine the priorities within the public consultation work and to agree an action plan to close the gaps, to be presented to the Scrutiny Committee for approval.	Operations, Equality and Diversity, Corporate Communications
7.	That a delivery programme of local actions to address any gaps in stakeholder engagement for future public consultation processes is implemented with periodic reviews and measures against desired outcomes.	Equality and Diversity, Corporate Communications
8.	That the format of future consultation questions be reviewed so that they are more open, do not lead the respondent and are not repetitive in nature.	Corporate Communications
9.	That a focus group/user group be established to receive customer feedback on potential questions, to reframe questions used in the 2012/13 consultation and to identify key people for future public consultation exercises, for e.g. community group leaders.	Corporate Communications
10.	That Section 41 members liaise with elected members from their respective councils and that Section 41 members be involved in future consultation exercises as they have a key network of contacts and can promote local events.	Section 41 members

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Recommendation		Responsible Officer/Member
11.	To undertake comparative exercises on how consultation is carried out in other fire authorities and local authorities, including performance and methodology.	Corporate Communications
12.	To continue to build “warm” relationships with the media, senior officers and Section 41 members.	All
13.	To analyse who regularly Tweets on the Fire website in order to target them on future consultation exercises.	Corporate Communications
14.	To use various promotional events at local fire stations to engage with the community and use station personnel to promote the public consultation process and build upon their local community links.	All
15.	To build a database of contact details of members of the public who are interested in being consulted in future public consultation exercises providing the Service gives respondents clear reasons for collecting their contact details.	Corporate Communications
16.	To undertake any further work to ascertain why there was a low online response rate to public consultation, in particular, analysing whether the use of more closed questions would be more effective.	Corporate Communications

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