

Minutes of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

11th February, 2008, at 11.00 am
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Howard (Chairman);
Councillor Ward (Vice-Chairman);
Councillors Alden, Ali Khan, Birbeck, Delaney,
Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Foster, Gazey, Hinton,
Hussain, Idrees, Jackson, Mulhall, Stevenson,
Turner, Wild and Wilkes;
Mr Topliss.

Apologies: Councillors Bowen, G Davies, S Davis, Ryder,
Singh, Spence and Tagger.

1/08 Chair's Announcements

Members were informed that Councillor Bowen had not been well since Christmas and was currently unable to attend meetings of the Authority. Members asked for their good wishes to be conveyed to Councillor Bowen for a speedy recovery to the best of health.

The Chair indicated that he would be meeting with appropriate Members and officers from Birmingham City Council to discuss current issues with regard to the consolidation of the site of the new Headquarters.

2/08 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd December, 2007 be confirmed as a correct record.

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3/08 **Budget and Precept 2008/2009**

The Authority considered a report on the Capital Programme for 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11, the prudential indicators relating to the Authority's capital financing requirements, the revenue budget and forward looking efficiency statement for 2008/09, and the consequent precept level and resultant amount payable by each constituent District Council.

In accordance with the Local Government Act, 2003, the Treasurer submitted a report on the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of reserves. Best endeavours had been made to ensure that the budget and reserves were adequate using the information available at this time. The budget had been constructed with a professional policy-led medium term strategic framework, using appropriate assumptions, linking investment and spending to key priorities, and having undertaken a comprehensive assessment of risk.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Authority's Revenue Budget for 2008/2009 of £115.410 m, as now submitted, be approved;
- (2) that the Authority's capital programme for 2008/2009, 2009/2010 and 2010/2011, as now submitted, be approved;
- (3) that the Authority's Prudential Indicators, as now submitted, be approved;
- (4) that the Authority's Forward Looking 2008/09 Efficiency Statement as now submitted be approved;
- (5) that it be noted that the constituent District Councils have formally set their Council Tax bases for the year 2008/2009 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:

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	Tax Base
	£
Birmingham	293,011.00
Coventry	89,174.60
Dudley	97,370.45
Sandwell	84,633.10
Solihull	78,456.00
Walsall	76,771.00
Wolverhampton	<u>71,517.00</u>
	790,933.15
	=====

- (6) that the following amounts be now calculated by the Authority for the year 2008/2009 in accordance with Sections 43 to 48 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:-
- (i) £119,462,000 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) £4,052,000 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 43(3)(a) to (b) of the Act.
 - (iii) £115,410,000 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) £79,233,000 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 2007/2008.
 - (v) £45.739999 being the amount at (iii) above less the amount at (iv) above all divided by the total amount at

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(5) 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</u>	£	£
	<u>Bands</u>		
		(to 6 decimals)	(to 2 decimals)
	A	30.493333	30.49
	B	35.575555	35.58
	C	40.657777	40.66
	D	45.739999	45.74
	E	55.904443	55.90
	F	66.068887	66.07
	G	76.233332	76.23
	H	91.479998	91.48

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 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	13,402,324
Coventry City Council	4,078,846
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	4,453,724
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	3,871,118
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	3,588,577
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council	3,511,505
Wolverhampton City Council	3,271,188
Total	<hr/> 36,177,282 <hr/> =====

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being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (v) above by the appropriate tax base at (5) 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 6(vii) above be issued in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

4/08 **Monitoring of Finances**

The Authority received a report on the monitoring of finances for the current financial year to December 2007.

5/08 **Corporate Strategy Action List; Medium Term Financial Plan; Annual Service Plan Consultation Outcomes and Proposed Responses and the Action Plan of the Annual Service Plan**

The Authority considered a report setting out the proposed Corporate Strategy Action List which would form part of the Corporate Strategy 2008-11 and which would align with the medium-term Financial Plan; the proposed responses to issues raised during the public consultation on the Action Plan; and the proposed Action Plan section of the Annual Service Plan.

The Chair reported receipt of a petition objecting to the proposals for Tettenhall Fire Station. The Authority was advised of further concerns raised by residents with regard to the proposal to move the appliance from that station to the city centre between 11 pm and 11 am and that staffing of Tettenhall Fire Station needed to be consistent to encourage engagement with the community.

The Chief Fire Officer indicated that the current proposal to move the appliance had been based on the latest risk analysis. It was proposed to raise the profile of Tettenhall Fire Station within the local community, and the possibility of implementing a permanent late shift at this station would be the subject of a

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further report within the next six months.

Reference was made to a community event being hosted shortly at Sedgley Fire Station and Members of the Authority were welcome to attend.

Resolved:

- (1) that the three year Corporate Strategy Action List as now submitted be approved;
- (2) that the Medium Term Financial Plan aligned to the three year Corporate Strategy Action List as now submitted be approved;
- (3) that the proposed responses to the replies received as part of the consultation process as now submitted be approved, subject to inclusion of reference to proposals to investigate the possibility of introducing a permanent late shift at Tettenhall Fire Station;
- (4) that the Action Plan section of the Annual Service Plan as now submitted be approved.

(Councillor Stevenson asked that her name be recorded as having voted against the proposals for Tettenhall Fire Station as set out in the Action Plan.)

6/08

Protocol between Local Housing Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities to improve Fire Safety

The Authority noted a report informing Members of the partnership work being carried out by the West Midlands Fire Service with local Housing Authorities to support efficiency in the implementation of the Housing Act 2004 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 with regard to the enforcement of fire safety provisions in pursuance of a protocol agreed between the Chief Fire Officers' Association, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, the National Landlords' Association, Local Authorities Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services and the National Houses in Multiple Occupation

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Network and signed by the Under Secretaries of State for Fire Safety and Housing.

The protocol identified discrete areas of inspection and enforcement and appropriate review and monitoring arrangements. Under the protocol, housing authorities would take the lead in inspection and enforcement in respect of fire safety for single dwellings; houses in multiple occupation; and self contained flats. The Fire Service would take the lead on premises with mixed commercial/ residential accommodation and sheltered housing; hostels, bed and breakfast and hotel accommodation; and houses in multiple occupation owned or managed by a housing authority.

Members expressed concern about the safety of student accommodation in the private rented sector. The Chief Fire Officer indicated that the new protocol would help in targeting fire safety work. It would not prevent the Fire Service giving fire safety advice in respect of houses in multiple occupation.

Members raised the issue of fire sprinklers and the potential for their use in houses in multiple occupation. The Chief Fire Officer indicated that review of building regulations was still ongoing but that this did not prevent the Fire Service working proactively with landlords in the meantime to encourage the installation of sprinkler systems. Reference was made to the ongoing need to encourage local authorities to install such systems in buildings under their control.

7/08

Institution of Legal Proceedings

The Authority was informed that, after consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, legal proceedings had been instituted in respect of New Look Limited, Unit 11A, the Fort Shopping Centre, Birmingham, for failure to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

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8/08 **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005**

The Authority considered a report recommending delegation of powers to the Chief Fire Officer to instigate legal proceedings under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Resolved that the report be deferred for consideration by the Executive Committee in due course.

9/08 **Minutes of the Executive Committee**

The minutes of the meetings held on 17th December, 2007, 14th and 28th January, 2008 were received.

With reference to Minute No 4/08 (Consultation with Non-Domestic Ratepayers) the Chair reported that the Black Country Chamber of Commerce would be hosting an event at Safeside within the new Headquarters complex with a view to promoting sponsorship of this initiative by the business community.

With reference to Minute No 5/08 (Audit Commission Consultation on Proposed Work Programme and Scale of Fees), the Chair indicated that a robust response had now been sent to the Audit Commission on behalf of the Authority and he undertook to provide a copy to the Leader of the Opposition. The Chair would be meeting with his counterparts from other Metropolitan Fire Authorities shortly and would raise this matter with them.

10/08 **Notes of the Policy Planning Forum**

The notes of the meetings held on 17th December, 2007, and 28th January, 2008 were received.

Item 1/08 (Introduction and Announcements) was corrected to indicate that a watch commander aged 43 had been admitted to hospital following a suspected heart attack whilst on duty.

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11/08 **Minutes of the Audit Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th January, 2008 were received.

(Meeting ended at 11.44 am)

<p><i>Contact Officer: Georgina Wythes Democratic Services Unit Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 0121-569-3791</i></p>
