

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

27th June, 2011 at 11.00 am
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: Councillors Alden, Ali Khan, Andrew, Chambers, Clinton, Davies, Davis, Delaney, Docker, Douglas-Maul, Edwards, Eustace, Finnegan, Foster, Griffiths, Hogarth, Idrees, Lines, O'Neill, Ryder, Sandy, Singh, Spence, Stevenson, Tranter, Turner and Walsh.

Observers: Messrs Ager, Denny and Topliss.

33/11 **Election of Chair**

Resolved that Councillor Edwards be elected Chair of the Authority for the period ending with the annual meeting in 2012.

34/11 **Election of Vice-Chair**

Resolved that Councillor Eustace be elected Vice-Chair of the Authority for the period ending with the annual meeting in 2012.

35/11 **Declaration of Interests**

Councillors Edwards and O'Neill declared personal interests in Minute No 48/11 below (Monitoring of Finances).

36/11

Chair's and Chief Fire Officer's Announcements

The Chair welcomed Members to the Annual Meeting of the Authority. He paid tribute to the West Midlands Fire Service, stating that it was the most efficient and effective in the country, and whose firefighters often worked at great personal risk on behalf of their communities and were second to none in their skills, training and dedication. He also stated that the support staff underpinned the work carried out by firefighters and were an essential part of the fire service family. He noted that through the use of fire prevention programmes, great improvements had been made in public safety with deaths and injuries from fires reducing significantly. He indicated that the Fire Service, like all public services, was coming under huge financial pressures, and that he would endeavour to ensure continued excellence in service provision. He hoped that Members would continue to work together for the benefit of the Service as they had in the past.

The Chair announced that Matthew Sanuda, an apprentice in the Workshops, had been awarded the Chief Fire Officers' Association 'Apprentice of the Year' Award. This was the second year that an employee of the West Midlands Fire Service had received this award. The apprenticeship scheme was delivered in partnership with Walsall College. Members congratulated Matthew on his achievement.

The Chair also reported that firefighters David Grigg and Ross Baird had recently taken part in the Arch to Arch Triathlon, completing the event in record time and raising over £8,000 for charity. Members congratulated David and Ross on their achievement.

The Chair also announced that the Authority had been awarded an award from the 2012 Olympics Inspire Programme for its community and youth engagement work. Saleha Williams from the Olympic Inspire Programme and the former Olympic athlete David Moorcroft were present at the meeting to present the award to the Chair.

The Chief Fire Officer welcomed Members to the first meeting of the year. He announced that the final of the Fire Service Schools Quiz would take place on 12th July 2011 at Safeside and invited all Members to attend.

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority – 27th June, 2011

37/11 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 18th April, 2011, be confirmed as a correct record.

38/11 Membership of the Authority 2011/12

The Clerk reported on the membership of the Authority for 2011/12.

39/11 Questions on Discharge of Functions

Resolved that the following Councillors be nominated under Section 41 of the Local Government Act, 1985, to answer questions put in the course of proceedings of constituent Councils on the discharge of the Authority's functions:-

	<u>Lead Councillor</u>	<u>Substitute Councillor</u>
Birmingham	Alden	Eustace
Coventry	Walsh	Sandy
Dudley	Ryder	Turner
Sandwell	Edwards	Tranter
Solihull	Davis	Hogarth
Walsall	Andrew	Douglas-Maul
Wolverhampton	O'Neill	Singh

40/11 Governance of the Authority 2011/12

The Authority considered a report on governance of the Authority for 2011/2012. The report set out draft terms of reference for committees, panels and working groups; lead member portfolios; a calendar of meetings for the year; and the Members' Allowances Scheme.

Minor amendments were proposed to the following documents:

- Member portfolios, to take account of changes in the external audit regime;
- Terms of reference of the Audit and Performance Management Committee - to include the scrutiny and review of treasury

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority – 27th June, 2011

management arrangements, in line with a recommendation of a recent internal audit report;

- Executive Committee and the Members' Allowances Scheme - deletion of reference to the West Midlands Regional Management Board, as the Board had been dissolved in December 2010;
- Terms of reference of the Joint Consultative Panel - to clarify the function of the employer's side to make recommendations to the Service or Authority as appropriate;
- Terms of reference of the Member Development Working Group – deletion of reference to the formal Member Development Charter, which was no longer to be pursued.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the terms of reference of committees, panels and working groups, as set out in Appendix 1, be approved;
- (2) that portfolios for Lead Members, as set out in Appendix 2, be approved;
- (3) that the calendar of meetings for 2011/2012, as set out in Appendix 3, be approved;
- (4) that the Members' Allowance Scheme, as set out in Appendix 4, be approved.

41/11 Political Balance and Membership of Committees 2011/2012

The Authority considered the constitution and political balance of Committees and the assignment of Members to committees, panels and working groups for 2011/2012.

The Authority was advised that the term of office of the independent member of the Audit and Performance Management Committee expired at this meeting. A Government consultation was currently underway on the future of local public audit which contained proposals to increase the number of independent members on audit committees.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the term of office of Mr Mike Ager, independent member on the Audit and Performance Management

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority – 27th June, 2011

Committee [without voting rights], be extended by one year to expire with the Annual Meeting of the Authority in June 2012;

- (2) that the appointment of independent members of the Standards Committee be confirmed as indicated below:
Mr Colin Topliss for the two year term of office expiring with the Annual Meeting of the Authority to be held in June 2012;
Mr David Denny for the four year term of office expiring with the Annual Meeting of the Authority to be held in June 2014;
- (3) that the constitution and political balance of the committees, panels and working groups established under Minute No 40/11 above, as set out in Appendix 5, be approved for the period ending with the annual meeting of the Authority in 2012;
- (4) that the nominees of the following representative bodies serve on the Joint Consultative Panel, without voting rights, for the period ending with the annual meeting of the Authority in 2012:

Fire Brigades Union – two representatives
Fire Officers Association – one representative
UNISON – one representative
Association of Principal Fire Officers – one representative.
- (5) that Members and substitute Members be appointed to committees, panels and working groups for the period ending with the annual meeting of the Authority in 2012 as indicated in Appendix 6;
- (6) that the appointment of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of committees, panels and working groups for the period ending with the annual meeting of the Authority in 2012 be approved as indicated in Appendix 6;
- (7) that the Chair and Vice Chair of the Standards Committee be elected from amongst the independent Members at the first meeting of the Committee in the current year;

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority – 27th June, 2011

- (8) that Members be appointed as Lead Members as indicated in Appendix 6.

42/11 Appointment of Representatives to Serve on Other Bodies

The Authority considered the appointment of representatives to serve on other bodies during 2011/2012.

Resolved:

- (1) that the appointments of representatives to serve on other bodies as set out in Appendix 6 be approve;.
- (2) that the Chair (Councillor Edwards) (or his nominee) be authorised to exercise the Authority's Corporate Vote at the Local Government Association General Assembly and that the Authority's General Assembly votes be allocated in accordance with proportionality of the Association;
- (3) that Councillor Edwards be appointed as the Authority's nominated Director of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services Regional Control Centre Limited Company as indicated in Appendix 6 in place of David Hinton whose appointment hereby terminates.

43/11 Delegations to Chief Officers

The Authority considered the list of the powers delegated to Chief and Statutory Officers.

Resolved that the list of powers delegated to the Authority's Chief and Statutory Officers, as set out in Appendix 7, be approved.

44/11 Member Attendance at Conferences, Seminars and Visits

The Authority considered a report setting out the arrangements for authorising attendance at conferences, seminars and visits.

Resolved that the events for 2011/2012 set out in Appendix 8

be approved for the purpose of the payment of travel and subsistence allowances and conference fees (where appropriate) subject to the necessary budgetary provision being available.

45/11 **Financial Regulations**

The Authority considered revised Financial Regulations which had been updated to reflect the ongoing emphasis on value for money and the need to identify efficiencies, together with increases in the financial limits for items in the asset register and the disposal of obsolete stock or equipment.

Resolved:

- (1) that the Financial Regulations set out in Appendix 9 be approved;
- (2) that the Chief Fire Officer provide an update to the Chair with regard to ongoing negotiations with neighbouring fire authorities with regard to charges under Section 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

46/11 **Future of Local Public Audit**

The Authority considered a draft response to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) consultation with regard to the future of Local Public Audit. The DCLG proposals for the future delivery of public audit had been designed to allow local bodies to appoint their own external auditors; to ensure that the results of local audit work were easily accessible to the public to increase accountability; to achieve a reduction in the overall cost of audit; and to ensure high standards of audit which was effective and transparent.

Members discussed the appropriate level of remuneration to independent members of audit committees. They also considered the impact the Government proposals might have on the Authority's current arrangement for performance management to be dealt with by the Audit and Performance Management Committee which might need to be reviewed in the light of the Government's decisions on

the future of local public audit.

Resolved that the draft response, as now submitted, be approved for submission to the Department of Communities and Local Government.

47/11 **Governance Statement 2010/2011**

The Authority considered its Governance Statement for 2010/2011.

The Statement was based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of policies, aims and objectives and to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised, the impact should they be realised and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. The Statement had operated throughout the year ended 31st March 2011 and up to the date of the approval of the annual report and accounts.

The Statement was designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it could therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

The approved Statement would be signed by the Chair, the Clerk and Monitoring Officer and the Treasurer.

Resolved that the Authority's Governance Statement for 2010/2011 be approved.

48/11 **Monitoring of Finances**

The Authority noted a report on the monitoring of finances to the end of May 2011.

49/11 **Tettenhall Garage Refurbishment (Youth and Community Facility)**

The Chief Fire Officer reported that a capital bid had been submitted to Wolverhampton City Council through the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership, to enable the development of a disused garage at Tettenhall Fire Station as a venue to develop a young firefighters' association group and to provide a broad range

of activities for young people. The funding had been approved subject to the establishment of a steering group including local residents to develop and manage the resource and to making the resource available for wider community use if possible.

Members expressed the appreciation of their local communities for the work of the West Midlands Fire Service in youth and community activities across the wider area.

Resolved that the acceptance of £45,540 funding from Wolverhampton City Council to enable the refurbishment of the disused garage at Tettenhall Fire Station for a youth and community facility be approved.

50/11

Provision of a Photovoltaic Solar Generation System at Handsworth Community Fire Station

The Chief Fire Officer reported that Marks and Spencer had offered an opportunity to the West Midlands Fire Service to take part in one of three pilot schemes in the United Kingdom testing the technical and financial viability of solar power via the installation of a photovoltaic (PV) solar electricity generation system. It was proposed to install the equipment at the Handsworth Community Fire Station. The equipment would become the property of the West Midlands Fire Service. The revenue savings and feed in tariffs of approximately £3,500 per annum would be retained by the Community Partnership, less an allowance for operational and maintenance costs. The remaining funds would be used to support local community projects including literacy/numeracy/IT classes, exercise classes for the over 50s, safety education and supporting the African Caribbean Elders' Group activities. This project would also support the environmental strategy of the Service, specifically the carbon reduction targets.

Resolved that the acceptance of £26,250 funding from Marks and Spencer for the supply and installation of a PV solar system at Handsworth Community Fire Station be approved.

51/11 Update on the Revision of the Employee Relations Framework

The Authority noted a report on progress with the update of the Employee Relations Framework. The Employee Relations Framework was received by the Authority in September 2009 and implemented thereafter. The Trade Unions at the Joint Consultative Committee in August 2010 had requested that the Framework be reviewed. A number of changes proposed by management were outlined, and a draft revised Framework was currently the subject of consultation with the trades unions. It was hoped to submit a final draft of the Framework to the Authority in September 2011.

52/11 Annual Report of the Standards Committee 2010/11

The Authority received the Annual Report of the Standards Committee for 2010/11.

53/11 Minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee

The minutes of the meetings held on 6th and 13th June, 2011 were received.

54/11 Minutes of the Standards Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th June, 2011 were received.

55/11 Notes of the Member Development Working Group

The notes of the meeting held on 18th April, 2011 were received.

56/11 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 or business affairs of any particular person (including

the authority holding that information).

57/11 **Planned Procurement Exercises for 2011/12**

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 2011/12:

Replacement Floor Covering
Solar panels at various locations.

(Meeting ended at 12.15 pm)

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