

Minutes of the Chair's Committee

**13th October, 2014 at 10.00 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham**

Present: Councillor Edwards (Chair);
Councillors Eustace, Idrees, Sealey and Spence.

Apology: Councillor Davis.

1/14

Adrian Thomas Review into Conditions of Service

The Committee was advised that Sir Ken Knight's review, "Facing the Future", which was published in May 2013, highlighted a number of areas where it was believed greater efficiencies could be achieved by Fire and Rescue Authorities in England. One of the areas identified was whether the conditions of service, under which all uniformed members of staff operated, presented a barrier to changes that might enable the achievement of further efficiencies.

In support of this the Fire Minister, Penny Mordaunt MP, had launched an independent review of the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services Scheme of Conditions of Service, known as the Grey Book and the NJC for Principal Fire Officers of Local Authority Fire Brigades, Constitution and Scheme of Conditions of Service, known as the Gold Book. Adrian Thomas, a senior civil servant, who had a background in personnel management in the private sector, had been commissioned to undertake this review.

As part of the initial stages of the review Adrian Thomas had called for Fire Authorities to complete an initial questionnaire which was split into two parts. The first part sought statistical information. Answers to these questions had been proposed and were set out as Appendix 1 to the report. The second part asked wider questions. Answers to these questions had been proposed and were set out as Appendix 2 for the Committee's consideration.

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A separate questionnaire had been made available to firefighters directly, the deadline for which expired on 19th September 2014. An extension to this deadline had been agreed for Fire Authority responses until 17th October 2014. Any outcomes from the review would be due before the notice of the General Election in 2015 was issued.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that he had invited Adrian Thomas to visit West Midlands Fire Service as it would have a unique response in so far as it was protecting its response time to incidents whilst retaining whole time firefighters.

Members noted that the National Joint Council (NJC) would normally undertake this type of review and that any proposals on the findings of the review should be agreed by the NJC.

Members asked and received answers to various aspects of the proposed responses in the appendices. It was agreed that the response to the question "What are the typical standards for entry for entry-level firefighters?" should be amended to read "GCSE's or their equivalent".

Resolved that the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Chair, be authorised to finalise and submit the Adrian Thomas Questionnaires into the Review of the Conditions of Service for Firefighters to the Department of Communities and Local Government and that a copy of the response be circulated to all members of the Committee.

2/14

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

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Delivery of the Leading Excellence Programme

The Committee received a report on proposals for the extension of the Leading Excellence Programme (LEP).

Organisational leadership development was the foundation to enable West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) to provide an environment that continually strived to develop a highly skilled, motivated and flexible workforce, which reflected the communities it worked in, and which engaged in continually improving the service.

In support of this approach WMFS had been delivering the LEP and a range of development activities over the last 4 years. In this time the co-ordinated approach to individual, team and organisational development had significantly influenced the leadership within the Service.

In reviewing the current way in which this programme was being delivered to evaluate the best outcomes for the future, whilst still continuing with the foundation degree and Bachelor of Arts with Honours Degree for a total of 30 individuals in this academic year, it was proposed to continue with the current programme and provide continuity for those individuals on the 4 year programme. An increase in the number of applicants for these courses for the Academic year 2014/15, starting in October 2014, had resulted in a financial requirement of £147,520. Contracts in excess of £100K would ordinarily require formal tenders but under the current circumstances, special exemption 2.17 (f) of the Authority's Procurement Procedures was proposed in that the goods or services were deemed expedient for Service requirements.

Following the current review it was intended to enter into a procurement process that would secure a three year leading excellence rolling programme across the academic years 2015 until 2018.

Resolved that the Chief Fire Officer award the contract for the further delivery of the Leading Excellence Programme to Coventry University College in the sum of £147,520 and that any necessary exemption to Procurement Procedures be applied.

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(The meeting ended at 10.32 am)

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