

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

**18<sup>th</sup> February, 2013 at 11.00 am**  
**at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham**

**Present:** Councillor Edwards [Chair];  
Councillor Idrees [Vice Chair];  
Councillors Aston, Atwal, Chambers, Clinton, Davies,  
Delaney, Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Finnegan, Foster,  
Hogarth, O'Neill, O'Reilly, Quinnen, Sealey, Singh,  
Tranter, Walsh, Wright and Young.

**Apologies:** Councillors Auluck, Davis, Spence, Ward and Yardley.

**Observer:** Mr Ager.

1/13 **Declaration of Interests**

Councillors Edwards and O'Neill declared non-disclosable pecuniary interests in Minute No 5/13 below (Monitoring of Finances).

2/13 **Chair's Announcements**

The Authority was informed that former Vice Chair of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority and former Dudley Councillor J T Wilson, had passed away.

The Authority observed a one minute silence as a token of respect.

3/13 **Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2012, be confirmed as a correct record.

**Budget and Precept 2013/2014 and Budget Forecast 2014/2015 to 2015/2016**

The Authority considered a report on the Capital Programme for 2013/14 to 2016/17, the prudential indicators relating to the Authority's capital financing requirements, the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, the Treasury Management Strategy, the revenue budget and the consequent precept level and resultant amount payable by each constituent District Council.

The Comprehensive Spending Review had indicated that grant funding for fire and rescue authorities would be reduced by 25% over a four year period and that the largest portion of the reduction would occur in years 3 and 4 of the settlement. The settlement for 2011/12 and 2012/13 represented an overall grant reduction of £10.164m (12.58%) over two years.

On 8 October 2012, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had announced that the Government would make funding available for a third year to enable councils to freeze their Council Tax in 2013/14.

The grant would be equivalent to a 1% increase to the 2012/13 council tax, payable for two years (2013/14 and 2014/15). In addition, the Government proposed a referendum threshold for any Local Authority increasing its Council tax by more than 2%. However, on 20 December 2012, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government had confirmed the provisional settlement for 2013/14 at £73,757m resulting in a grant reduction of £6.017m. In addition, it was announced that for a number of authorities, including the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority, the figure to trigger a referendum would be the higher of a 2% or £5 per annum increase for relevant properties.

Members had received a presentation at the Policy Planning Forum on the proposed impact of accepting the Government's 1% Council Tax freeze grant compared to increasing Council Tax up to the referendum threshold level.

At the District Leaders meeting on 23 January 2013, the Fire Authority's intention to exercise its discretion of increasing the Band D Council tax by up to £5 per annum was endorsed.

It was now proposed to introduce a Band D Council Tax increase of £4.99 in 2013/14 which would equate to a 10.42% increase.

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The Treasurer gave assurances in accordance with sections 25-27 of the Local Government Act 2003 that the budget preparation had been robust and that the level of reserves was sustainable and sufficient.

Whilst members of the principal opposition party acknowledged that a Council tax freeze was unrealistic and recognised the financial position of the Authority, they expressed concerns at the proposed 10.42% increase which was at the top of the threshold Government had set before it triggered a referendum and felt that a phased increase over future years would be better.

The Chair reiterated that the Authority was facing a 25% reduction over a four year period which equated to £21million. The Government had also recognised that the Authority was one of the lowest preceptor authorities and as such, had been given a special dispensation. Six of the eight authorities given the special dispensation had approved an increase to the new limit.

The Authority was rapidly shrinking as an organisation with rider staff (staff providing operational cover from fire stations) being reduced from 1596 people to 1236 during April 2011 to March 2015. The Authority needed to plan for the medium term by getting substantial funds in the base budget.

The proposed increase of £4.99 at Band D would equate to an increase of approximately 10p per week per household which would enable 38 fire stations to be maintained and limited recruitment of firefighters to be undertaken.

### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that the Authority's Revenue Budget for 2013/2014 of £33.520m as now submitted, be approved;
- (2) that the Authority's capital programme for 2013/2014 to 2016/2017, as now submitted, be approved;
- (3) that the Authority's Treasury Management Strategy, which includes the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, and the Prudential Indicators, as now submitted, be approved;

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- (4) that it be noted that the constituent District Councils have formally set their Council Tax bases for the year 2013/2014 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:

	<b>Tax Base</b>
Birmingham	229,025.0
	0
Coventry	70,863.80
Dudley	82,478.38
Sandwell	65,467.60
Solihull	70,499.00
Walsall	60,664.11
Wolverhampton	<u>55,666.20</u>
	<u>634,664.0</u>
	<u>9</u>

- (5) that the following amounts be now calculated by the Authority for the year 2013/2014 in accordance with Sections 40 to 48 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:
- (i) £116,360,000 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 42A(2)(a) to (d) of the Act;
  - (ii) £82,840,000 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 42A(3)(a) to (b) of the Act;
  - (iii) £33,520,000 being the amount by which the aggregate at (5)(i) above exceeds the aggregate at (5)(ii) above calculated by the Authority in accordance with Section 42A(4) of the Act as its council tax requirement for the year;
  - (iv) £52.82 being the amount at (5)(iii) above divided by the total amount at (4) above, calculated by the Authority in accordance with Section 42B(1) of the Act as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year;

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(6)	<u>Valuation Bands</u>	£ (to 6 decimals)	£ (rounded to 2 decimals)
	A	35.210534	35.21
	B	41.078956	41.08
	C	46.947378	46.95
	D	52.815801	52.82
	E	64.552645	64.55
	F	76.289490	76.29
	G	88.026334	88.03
	H	105.631601	105.63

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (5)(iv) 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;

(7) Resultant precepts:

	£
Birmingham City Council	12,096,139
Coventry City Council	3,742,728
Dudley MBC	4,356,162
Sandwell MBC	3,457,724
Solihull MBC	3,723,461
Walsall MBC	3,204,023
Wolverhampton City Council	<u>2,940,055</u>
<b>Total</b>	<u>33,520,292</u>

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (5)(iv) above by the appropriate tax base at (4) above in accordance with section 48(2) of the Act, as the amount of precept payable by each constituent District Council;

(8) that the precept for each District Council as calculated at (7) above be issued in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

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### **5/13      Monitoring of Finances**

The Authority noted a report on the monitoring of finances to the end of January 2013.

### **6/13      The Plan 2013-2016**

The Authority considered the draft Plan 2013/16 which outlined the strategic direction for the Service and set out the key priorities and strategic objectives.

The Plan defined the range of services that would be provided, the outcomes that would be achieved and the commitment to partnership working.

The Plan and corporate performance indicators and targets would be subject to review throughout the year to ensure they were still valid and relevant. Performance against the Plan would also be monitored on a regular basis by the Scrutiny Committee.

The Plan would also include a joint Strategic Foreword from the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer. The Community Safety Strategy would also be linked and aligned to The Plan, providing further clarity on how priorities would be delivered and how risk based information was used to develop plans.

### **7/13      Outcome of Public Consultation – Draft Community Safety Strategy**

The Authority was informed that the Fire National Framework Document outlined the Authority's requirement to produce an integrated risk management plan (known as the Community Safety Strategy) covering a three year period to demonstrate how it would discharge its responsibilities in a way that was open and transparent to its community and others with an interest. The Authority was also required to demonstrate, through effective and meaningful consultation, how its plans had been developed.

The Authority now considered the outcome of public consultation on the draft Community Safety Strategy which took place between 19 November 2012 and 4 January 2013.

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It was acknowledged that whilst the level of responses received was low, there was a legal requirement to consult on the Strategy. The Scrutiny Committee, as part of its work programme, would be reviewing consultation methods and would look to improve engagement with members of the public so that it was more effective.

### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that the outcome of public consultation on the draft Community Safety Strategy and the responses to the consultation questions, as now submitted, be received;
- (2) that the analysis of the outcome of consultation and its impact on the draft Community Safety Strategy be noted;
- (3) that the proposed amendments to the Community Safety Strategy be approved.

8/13

### **Proposed Vehicle Replacement Programme 2013 to 2015**

Approval was sought to proceed with the proposed Brigade Vehicle Replacement Programme (VRP) for the financial year 2013/14, following a review of the ongoing VRP.

Due to current financial constraints and the Brigades' requirement to review the type and size of appliance used for delivering the front line response under the Building upon Success programme, the Vehicle Replacement Plan for Pump Rescue Ladders (PRLs) was now three years behind schedule, although the impact of this would be offset to some extent by the introduction of Brigade Response Vehicles in 2012/13 and the subsequent two financial years. It was therefore proposed to procure 7 PRLs in the 2015/16 financial year.

Currently, there was a total of 4 frontline and 2 reserve aerial appliance vehicles. The current programme provided for one aerial appliance to be replaced during 2015/16.

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The ancillary fleet of vehicles was currently 111 vehicles and 13 specialised trailers.

The option of leasing vehicles would continue to be explored. When compared with the current method of procuring vehicles via the current framework agreement, the whole life costs of leasing were found to be more expensive.

### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that the Brigade Vehicle Replacement Programme 2013/14/15, as now submitted, be approved;
- (2) that the intention to procure a range of vehicles identified in the Vehicle Replacement Programme using the Office of Government Commerce (OGC), Open EU tenders and other approved Consortia routes that represent value for money to the Authority, be noted.

9/13

### **2013/2014 Property Asset Management Plan**

The Authority considered the proposed 2013/14 Property Asset Management Plan. Considerable work had taken place over the last twelve months to assess the appropriateness of existing property assets and to consider where any future investment should be directed. Further work being undertaken as part of the Building upon Success programme could have a significant impact on future proposed building related investments, e.g. new fire stations, type and location of training facilities, etc.

In order to demonstrate the effective use of resources, it was necessary to undertake a fundamental review of property assets which would also be flexible enough to respond to organisational changes.

Approval was now sought to the 2013/14 Property Asset Management Plan which would ensure the effective use of land and buildings.

**Resolved:** That the 2013/2014 Property Asset Management Plan, as now submitted, be approved.



10/13      **Brigade Response Vehicles (BRV)**

The Authority was informed that the Brigade Response Vehicles (BRV) work package analysed the effectiveness of the current vehicle fleet, with recommendations for improvement. This would ensure that the most appropriate and versatile fleet was assigned a proportionate response level to any incident and Pump Rescue Ladders (PRL) were used for larger and more resource intensive incidents.

As part of managing reducing staffing levels by 2015, BRVs had been selected as one of several preferred options to deliver a service in line with current standards, that accommodated risk based attendance matrix and a five minute target response time to category A incidents including house fires and road traffic collisions.

The BRV work package aimed to align the risk of an incident to the appropriate level of response to ensure its effective and safe resolution. The term 'not restricted by incident type' would enable a response vehicle to be mobilised to any incident where the identified risk could be effectively managed by the resources mobilised in terms of personnel and equipment – either in isolation or as a combined mobilisation. The BRV fleet would not be restricted by incident type and the majority of equipment would be taken directly from the PRL that the BRV replaced.

**Resolved** that the targeted implementation of Brigade Response Vehicles based upon the analysis of the evidence and data, which demonstrates that these vehicles are fit for purpose, as now submitted, be approved.

11/13      **Pay Policy Statement**

Approval was sought to the Pay Policy Statement for the 2013/14 financial year setting out the Authority's policies relating to the remuneration of its Chief Officers.

**Resolved** that the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2013/14, as now submitted, be approved.

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### **12/13 Minutes of the Audit Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 January, 2013, were received.

### **13/13 Minutes of the Executive Committee**

The minutes of the meetings held on 10 and 19 December, 2012 and 4 February, 2013, were received.

### **14/13 Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February, 2013 were received.

### **15/13 Notes of the Policy Planning Forum**

The notes of the meetings held on 10 December, 2012 and 7 January and 4 February, 2013, were received.

### **16/13 David Thomas**

The Chair introduced David Thomas, son of Tina Thomas who worked within the Procurement section of the Fire Service. David was currently studying governance in school and had requested to attend an Authority meeting to see how good governance and democracy worked in practice.

The Chair, on behalf of the Authority, thanked David for attending and encouraged more young people to attend local meetings to see decisions making at this level.

17/13      **Exclusion of the Public**

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

18/13      **Management Review**

Approval was sought to the new management structure for service support, service delivery and the flexible duty system, which would result in a reduction in the number of managers across the organisation.

Consultation would continue to be undertaken with affected managers, staff and trade union representatives.

The Chair, on behalf of the Authority, thanked Councillor Foster and O'Neill for their valuable contribution and input into the management review.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that the following revised management structure be approved as the basis for consultation with employees and representative bodies:
  - (a) the reduction in managers of 4 x Group Commanders and 7 x Station Commanders;
  - (b) the realignment of 64 x Watch Commander B posts to Watch Commander A posts, as set out below:

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	<b>Current</b>	<b>New structure</b>	<b>Change</b>
<b>WC A Core</b>	56	98	+42
<b>WC A Lates</b>	0	22	+22
<b>WC B Core</b>	96	54	-42
<b>WC B Lates</b>	24	2	-22

- (c) pending the implementation of the Shared Fire Control facility, 2 Group Commander (Fire Control) and 1 Watch Commander (Fire Control) posts be disestablished;
  - (d) the deletion of the posts of Communications Officer and Press Officer and creation of a new combined post covering both roles;
  - (e) the deletion of the post of Station Commander Fire Research and Investigation if external funding for this post is not secured;
  - (f) to disestablish 3 x Group Commander Posts in Fire Safety;
  - (g) to delete the post of Procurement Systems Manager;
  - (h) to delete the post of Senior Contracts Manager;
  - (i) to replace the role of Group Commander Organisational Development with a non uniformed role;
  - (j) to delete the post HR Manager Service Support;
- (2) that the deletion of 2 x Managerial Posts within Facilities Management be noted.

19/13

**Fire Extinguishers, Associated Products and Training Framework**

Approval was sought for West Midlands Fire Service to act as the contracting authority for 'The Consortium' for the supply of fire extinguishers, associated products and training.

The roles and responsibilities would be as follows:

- the Contracting Authority would act as the sponsor;
- the Consortium would prepare all documentation, run the EU tender process and ongoing framework management;
- the Contracting Authority could assist in producing outline user requirements for the Invitation to Tender documentation;
- 'The Consortium' would do a desktop evaluation and make recommendations for award;
- the Contracting Authority would sign off the evaluation and award;
- The Consortium would make the award on behalf of the Contracting Authority;
- The Consortium would manage the ongoing contract.

**Resolved** that the West Midlands Fire Service be authorised to act as the contracting Authority for the supply of fire extinguishers, associated products and training, subject to the satisfactory outcome of discussions with 'The Consortium' and legal advice.

20/13

**Planned Procurement Exercises for 2013/14**

Approval was sought to a number of planned tender exercises for goods and services during 2013/14, in accordance with Procurement Standing Orders.

**Resolved** that the following tender exercises for the provision of goods and services to West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority during 2013/14 be proceeded with:

- (i) Smoke Alarms;
- (ii) Cycle to Work Scheme;
- (iii) Temporary Fire Alarm Systems;
- (iv) Appliance Bay Door Maintenance;
- (v) Grounds Maintenance;

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- (vi) Energy;
- (vii) Orient Strand Board;
- (viii) Boiler Replacements;
- (ix) Window Replacements;
- (x) Construction of Training at Height Facilities;
- (xi) Rewiring of Canley, Wednesbury and Willenhall Fire Stations;
- (xii) Re-roofing of Oldbury Fire Station;
- (xiii) IT Hardware Refresh;
- (xiv) IT Peripherals;
- (xv) Uniform;
- (xvi) Supply and Fitting of Tyres;
- (xvii) Foam;
- (xviii) Brigade Response Vehicles;
- (xix) Thermal Image Cameras;
- (xx) Sale of Halesowen Fire Station.

(Meeting ended at 12.13 pm)

<p>Contact Officer: Suky Suthi-Nagra Democratic Services Unit Sandwell MBC 0121-569-3479</p>
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