

Minutes of the Executive Committee

21st May 2007, at 12.15 pm
at Fire Service Headquarters,
Lancaster Circus Queensway, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Hinton (Chair);
Councillors Eustace, Howard, Idrees and Ward;
Councillor Douglas-Maul [Substitute Member].

Observers: Councillors Birbeck, S Davis, Gazey, Ryder and Tagger;
Mr Topliss.

Apology: Councillor Bowen.

19/07 **Resourcing the Technical Rescue Station**

The Committee was reminded that it had been decided [Minute No. 68/05] to establish a Technical Rescue Station adjacent to Bickenhill Community Fire Station with responsibility for the following specialist services: Urban Search and Rescue [USAR], Rope Rescue, Water Rescue and Major Rescue Unit services. The Technical Rescue Station was currently sited at Solihull Community Fire Station, and it was intended to move to its new site following completion of building work.

The steps to be taken to transfer functions to the new Technical Rescue Station were outlined. The transfer of technical rescue operations currently located at West Bromwich, Willenhall, Perry Barr and Hay Mills Community Fire Stations would increase the amount of time these stations could spend on community safety work. A number of services would also be relocated from Bickenhill Community Fire Station: one major rescue unit to the Technical Rescue Station, and the breathing apparatus main control unit to the Hay Mills Community Fire Station. One Foam Distribution Unit would be decommissioned. As a result the Bickenhill Community Fire Station would no longer need to staff a prime mover, and its staffing requirement could be reduced from a total of 48 to 32 personnel.

The Technical Rescue Station would have a total staff of 35 including 4 watch commanders; 4 crew commanders, 24 firefighters, 1 USAR dog

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handler; 1 equipment maintenance officer and 1 administrative assistant. This required an increase in the uniformed establishment of one firefighter post to act as USAR dog handler and 2 non-uniformed posts.

The annual salary costs for the Technical Rescue Station were estimated to be £1,333,000, which could be met from consequential adjustments to staffing at other community fire stations and New Dimension funding. Ongoing funding of New Dimension commitments would be negotiable with Government, and would have to be closely monitored to assess any impact on the proposed funding arrangements. There would also be savings accruing from the decommissioning of one Foam Distribution Unit.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the steps to be taken to resource the Technical Rescue Station be approved; and
- (2) that the increase in the establishment of one firefighter post to act as USAR dog handler and two non-uniformed posts be approved.

20/07 Integrated Firecontrol and Firelink Project Plan and Delivery Assurance Reporting Tool (DART)

The Committee was informed that the Firecontrol and Firelink national project schedules had been revised following the award of the Infrastructure Services contract, and that this would affect the timing of tasks to be completed in relation to the planned implementation dates specific to the West Midlands Fire Service. A three-year implementation plan based on these new timescales was submitted for information.

The Firecontrol National Project Team had also developed a web-based portal which included a DART that would be used to report progress of this Brigade's Firecontrol transition activity to the national project team. DART would also enable the Brigade to be provided with a monthly progress report.

The Committee would be updated as key checkpoints in the implementation plan were due to be signed off.

21/07 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

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as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 relating to any consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations matters arising between the Authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the Authority.

22/07 Automatic Fire Detection (AFD) Call Challenge Project

The Committee was informed that the Service had responded to 13,968 calls to AFDs from 1st September 2005 to 31st August, 2006. Only 644 of these calls had resulted in incidents, most of which had caused minimal damage. Only 35 incidents caused more significant fire damage. AFDs had also resulted in 13,324 unnecessary blue light journeys by fire appliances over the same period.

It was therefore proposed to introduce a trial call challenge project designed to reduce the number of AFD false alarm calls attended and to use the project to gather performance data with a view to making proposals as part of the Authority's 2008/09 Annual Service Plan. The details of the call challenge process were outlined. There was evidence from other Fire and Rescue Services that this type of process could reduce AFD calls and unnecessary attendances.

Resolved that the call challenge project as outlined be approved.

(Meeting ended at 12.45 pm)

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