

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

25th June, 2007 at 11.30 am
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: Councillors Alden, Ali Khan, Birbeck, Bowen, G Davies, S Davis, Delaney, Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Foster, Gazey, Hinton, Howard, Hussain, Idrees, Jackson, Mulhall, Pitt, Ryder, Singh, Spence, Stevenson, Tagger, Turner, Ward, Wild and Wilkes.

25/07 Election of Chairman

Resolved that Councillor Howard be elected Chairman of the Authority for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2008.

26/07 Election of Vice-Chairman

Resolved that Councillor Ward be elected Vice-Chairman of the Authority for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2008.

27/07 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman paid tribute to Councillor David Hinton, the retiring Chair, who had held office since 2001. Members of the Authority endorsed his comments.

The Chairman reminded Members of the arrangements made for induction visits to take place on 9th July, 2007. He also indicated that the Youth Quiz final would be held on 17th July, 2007 and Members were welcome to attend.

The Chairman reported that the Authority was a triple winner at the Community Fire Safety Awards presented at the recent Fire

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Exhibition.

The Chair and Members congratulated Alan Brandon, Director of Corporate Planning and Support, on his appointment as a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the Queen's Birthday Honours List, for services to local government. The Chief Fire Officer reported that retired Station Officer Graham Bow had also been awarded an MBE for services to the Fire Service. Mr Bow was a tireless fundraiser for the Fire Service National Benevolent Fund.

Finally, Members stood in silent tribute to the memory of a firefighter from the Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service who was tragically killed whilst attending a car fire.

28/07 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd April, 2007, be confirmed as a correct record.

29/07 Membership of the Authority 2007/2008

The Clerk reported on the membership of the Authority for 2007/2008.

30/07 Questions on Discharge of Functions

Resolved that the following members 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	Howard	Eustace
Coventry	Foster	Gazey
Dudley	Ryder	
Sandwell	Hinton	
Solihull	S Davis	
Walsall	Pitt	Douglas-Maul
Wolverhampton	Singh	Bowen

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31/07 Constitution of Committees and Panels, Terms of Reference and Member Portfolios 2007/2008

The Authority considered a report on the constitution of committees and panels, their terms of reference and Member portfolios for 2007/2008, together with a calendar of meetings, and the existing Members' Allowances Scheme.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the constitution and terms of reference of committees and panels for 2007/2008, as set out in Appendix 1, be approved;
- (2) that the Member portfolios set out in Appendix 2 be approved;
- (3) that the calendar of meetings for 2007/2008 set out in Appendix 3 be approved;
- (4) that the application of the existing Members' Allowances Scheme, as set out in Appendix 4, be re-affirmed for 2007/2008.

32/07 Political Balance and Membership of Committees 2007/2008

The Authority considered the constitution and political balance of Committees and the assignment of members for 2007/2008.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the constitution and political balance of the Committees and Advisory Bodies established under Minute No 31/07 above for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2008 be as set out in Appendix 5;
- (2) that Members and substitute Members be appointed to Committees and Advisory Bodies for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2008 as indicated in Appendix 6;
- (3) that Authority employees be appointed to serve on the

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Joint Consultative Panel with voting rights;

- (4) that the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees and the Principal Elected Member [and Deputy] on the Joint Consultative Panel be as indicated in Appendix 6;
- (5) that Members be appointed as the Lead and Deputy Lead Members as indicated in Appendix 6;
- (6) that, with reference to the recommendation set out in Minute No 8/07 of the Appointments Committee, the number of independent Members on the Standards Committee be increased from two to three, and that Mr Roger Bagley, Mr David Denny and Mr Colin Topliss be appointed to serve as independent Members of the Standards Committee for the three-year term of office expiring with the Annual Meeting of the Authority to be held in 2010.

33/07 **Appointment of Representatives to Serve on Other Bodies**

The Authority considered the appointment of representatives to serve on other bodies during 2007/2008.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Chairman (Councillor Howard) and Councillors Eustace and Hinton (or their substitutes) be appointed to serve on the West Midlands Regional Management Board for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2008;
- (2) that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman (Councillors Howard and Ward) and Councillors Hinton and Eustace (or their nominees) be appointed to serve on the Local Government Association General Assembly for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2008;
- (3) that the Chairman (Councillor Howard) (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

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votes be as previously allocated;

- (4) that the Chairman (Councillor Howard) and Councillors Eustace and Hinton (or their nominees) be appointed to serve on the Local Government Association Fire Service Forum for the period ending with the annual meeting of the Authority in 2008;
- (5) that Councillor S Davis and the Chief Fire Officer (or their nominees) be appointed to serve on the Local Government Association Urban Commission for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2008;
- (6) that the following nominations be made in respect of the West Midlands Local Government Association for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2008:-

Association - Observer Member

Chairman of the Authority - Councillor Howard
(substitute: Councillor Ward);

Provincial Council

Councillor Gazey (substitute: tba);

- (7) that Councillor Turner (or his nominee) be appointed as an observer member to attend meetings of the Black Country Consortium on behalf of the Authority for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2008;
- (8) that Councillor Howard be appointed as the Authority's nominated Director of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services Regional Control Centre Limited Company in place of Councillor Hinton whose appointment hereby terminates.

34/07

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.

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Internal Audit Report

35/07

The Authority considered the annual Internal Audit Report, which summarised the results of the audits of the financial affairs of the Authority for the year ended 31st March 2007. The report indicated that Internal Audit could provide reasonable assurance that the Authority had adequate and effective governance, risk management and internal control processes. This was an unqualified opinion and the highest level of assurance available to Audit Services.

The Authority noted the report and the action taken arising from any recommendations therein.

Reference was made to significant issues that had been raised with regard to absence management procedures. The Chief Fire Officer reported that the need to introduce an appropriate management information system was being addressed, and undertook to report to a future Executive Committee on current levels of absence and the sickness reporting process.

36/07

Statement on the System of Internal Control for 2006/2007

The Authority was asked to approve a statement on the System of Internal Control (SIC).

All Fire and Rescue Authorities were required to submit a SIC with their statement of accounts. The SIC was based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Authority's policies, aims and objectives; to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realized; and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The SIC was designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure. It therefore only provided reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

The SIC had operated throughout the year ended 31st March 2006 and up to the date of the approval of the annual report and accounts.

The Statement would be signed by the Chair of the Authority and the Treasurer, who had a responsibility to ensure that the document was supported by reliable evidence and accurately reflected the

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Authority's internal control environment.

Resolved that the Authority's Statement on the System of Internal Control be approved, as now submitted.

37/07 Statement of Accounts 2006/07

The Authority was asked to approve its Statement of Accounts for the financial year ended 31st March 2007 and its backward looking efficiency statement for 2006/07.

The accounts had yet to be audited, and any material changes required by the Authority's external auditors would be notified to the Authority.

Resolved that the Statement of Accounts for the financial year ended 31st March 2007, and the backward looking 2006/07 efficiency statement, be approved.

38/07 Monitoring of Finances

The Authority noted a report on the monitoring of finances up to the end of May, 2007.

39/07 Erdington Town Centre Partnership

The Authority considered a report seeking approval to develop a service level agreement with Erdington Town Centre Partnership relating to the use of the Interactive Centre at Erdington Fire Station and to employ a Centre Facilitator on a twelve-month temporary contract.

The Authority had already received partnership funding towards the provision of the Interactive Centre at Erdington Fire Station. The Centre was now a thriving base for community safety and community engagement, but the growing demands of the Centre could no longer be managed within the workload of the station administration assistant.

The Erdington Town Centre Partnership had offered to fund a post of Centre Facilitator for twelve months that would be managed through a

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service level agreement. This post would also provide administrative and marketing support for the Town Centre Partnership, and had been evaluated at Grade 5. As part of the agreement it was also proposed that the Erdington Town Centre Manager would be allowed to use a vacant room in Erdington Fire Station for which an appropriate licence would be drawn up. There would be no costs to the Authority arising from these proposals.

Resolved:-

- (1) that authority be given to the Chief Fire Officer to negotiate and enter into a service level agreement with the Erdington Town Centre Partnership relating to use of the Interactive Centre at the Erdington Fire Station; and
- (2) that the establishment of a post of full-time Centre Facilitator of the Erdington Interactive Centre on a temporary 12 month contract, funded by the Erdington Town Centre Partnership, be approved.

40/07

Adult Learners' Week Award Winner

The Authority was informed that Watch Commander Tony Bucknall had been awarded an Individual Award in the Regional adult Learners' Week Awards following his successful completion of a Certificate of Education sponsored by the Brigade through the post entry training scheme. This award recognized individual learning that had demonstrated special creativity, imagination and/or energy. Mr Bucknall had used his study programme to deliver fire service youth inclusion activities and his work had been featured on a BBC television programme.

Mr Bucknall was present at the meeting and received a certificate and prize. Mr Bucknall indicated that he would be donating the prize money to the Fire Service Benevolent Fund. Members congratulated Mr Bucknall on his success.

41/07

Minutes of the Executive Committee

The minutes of the meetings held on 23rd April, 21st May and 11th June 2007 were received.

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42/07

Notes of the Policy Planning Forum

The notes of the meeting held on 21st May, 2007 were received.

43/07

Minutes of the Appointments Committee

The notes of the meetings held on 10th and 24th May and 8th June, 2007 were received.

With reference to Minute No 5/07 (Interviews for the post of Head of Human Resources), the Chief Fire Officer reported that David Johnson had accepted the post of Head of Human Resources and it was hoped he would take up his post with effect from 1st October, 2007.

In response to a question from a member, the Chair indicated that the newly-appointed Lead Member for Equality and Diversity would be progressing work that had already taken place to develop the Authority's Equality and Diversity policies and would be reporting back to Members in due course.

(Meeting ended at 12.17 pm)

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