

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

26th October, 2005

Members Present:-
Councillor Mrs. Dixon
Councillor Duggins
Councillor Field
Councillor Mutton
Councillor Patton
Councillor Ridge
Councillor Sawdon
Councillor Williams

Co-opted
Member Present:- Councillor Clifford

Cabinet Members
Present:- Councillor Foster (Cabinet Member (City Services))
Councillor Matchet (Cabinet Member (Health and Housing))

Employees Present:-
C. Hinde (Director of Legal and Democratic Services)
C. Steele (Legal and Democratic Services Directorate)
A. Townsend (Legal and Democratic Services Directorate)

In attendance:- R. Hulland (West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service)

97. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th September, 2005, were signed as a true record.

98. Call-Ins Stage 1

The Committee noted that no call-ins had been received yet this week. The deadlines for call-ins for Cabinet and Cabinet Member decisions made during the week commencing 17th October, 2005, was 9.00 a.m. on Friday 28th October, 2005. Any call-ins received after this meeting and before the deadline would be considered for validity by the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee in consultation with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (paragraph 5.4.5.25.4 of the City Council's Constitution refers).

99. West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

The Chair welcomed Mr. Hulland of West Midlands Fire Service to the meeting and briefly outlined the purpose of the meeting. The Committee had previously identified two areas they wished to discuss with the Fire Service:-

- details of how night time fire cover arrangements for Coventry are intended to work if all appliances are already in use, particularly as Coventry is on the periphery of the West Midlands and therefore is a long way from other

fire stations in the area. There have been instances where Warwickshire fire appliances have been called in to attend fires in Coventry.

- Now that the new night time fire cover arrangements have been in place for some weeks, to indicate how satisfied West Midlands Fire Service are that there are sufficient fire appliances to provide overnight fire protection in Coventry. This is in the light of the apparently greater number of fires over the last few months (both before and since the new cover arrangements were introduced) and the fact that on at least one occasion recently an appliance took 24 minutes to reach the scene of a fire.

Mr. Hulland gave a brief presentation which demonstrated how, when appliances are responding to an incident, other appliances available across the West Midlands made reactive moves to ensure that the whole of the West Midlands region remained covered. Mr. Hulland explained that the reactive moves around the West Midlands to provide constant fire cover did not necessarily mean there would be an appliance at every station at all times, but that they would be strategically placed to ensure cover for the area. It was noted that due to the geographical location of Coventry there would always be at least one appliance available in the City.

The Committee noted that the emphasis of the Fire Service had changed to promote fire prevention, for example by the introduction of home fire risk assessments and the promotion of the use of fire alarms, this initiative had driven down both the number of fires and number of fire deaths. Each day 15 fire appliances were allocated to fire prevention, although these could be recalled to provide reactive cover for the West Midlands region if necessary. It was noted that there was a "mutual aid" agreement between Warwickshire and West Midlands Fire Services which meant that each services would go into the other's area to provide temporary support if required. The West Midlands Fire Service had made more visits into Warwickshire than Warwickshire into West Midlands, Mr. Hulland estimated that the ratio was approximately 3 to 1.

With regard to the new arrangements for night time cover Mr. Hulland indicated that although there had been some teething problems with the introduction of the arrangements, appliances had been in the right place and every requirement for fire cover had been responded to. He was confident that the new arrangements were working and felt that this was illustrated by the challenging attendance times which had been set, the target average attendance times being five minutes for the first pump and seven minutes for the second pump. With regard to the suggestion that the number of fires in Coventry had increased over the last few months Mr. Hulland had examined call numbers over the past 12 months and did not believe there was any increase in call demand.

Members questioned Mr. Hulland on aspects of his presentation, in particular plans to deal with major emergencies or terrorist incidents, the consultation on the 2006 integrated risk management plan and the responsibility of the Fire Authority with regard to planning permissions. Mr. Hulland indicated that with regard new buildings there was currently no requirement for developers to install sprinkler systems but believed that this should be mandatory in buildings over a certain size, he indicated that the Fire Service had been lobbying government for this for some time with no result.

The Committee noted that the 2006/07 Integrated Risk Management Action Plan which was currently being consulted on did not propose the removal of an appliance from Foleshill between the hours of midnight and 8.00 a.m. for the period March 2006 to April

2007. While the Committee welcomed this they were concerned that when the Authority reviews the plan in future years the second fire appliance may be removed.

The Chair thanked Mr. Hlland for his attendance at what he believed has been an interesting and useful discussion.

100. **Outstanding Issues**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services that identified those issues on which further reports had been requested in order that Members could monitor progress.

RESOLVED that with regard to item 2 headed "Investigation into the Development and Funding of Coventry Transport Museum" the date for further consideration be amended to 16th November, 2005.

101. **Work Programme 2005/06**

The Committee considered and noted the Work Programme for the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee for the year 2005/06.