

AGENDA ITEM 3: MINUTES

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD AT BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS ON MONDAY 10 JANUARY 2005 COMMENCING AT 6.30PM AND CONCLUDED AT 7.26PM

**Present: Terry Mills (Chairman), Jeff Brooks (Vice-Chairman)
Mike Adams, Christine Borgars, James Mole, Barrie Patman**

1.01/05 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Having been reminded that in accordance with the Fire Authority's Code of Conduct, Members are required to declare interests, which are Personal or Personal and Prejudicial, where appropriate, it was noted that on this occasion there were no such declarations to be made.

1.02/05 PART I MINUTES: 29 NOVEMBER 2004

The Part I Minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 29 November 2004, having been previously circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

1.03/05 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS – COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT UPDATE

The Executive Committee received a copy (not reproduced) of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2005 (CPA) and was advised that a version is also available on disc.

In providing Members with a brief overview of the papers tabled, the Chief Fire Officer explained that a copy of the RBFRS submission had been sent on disc to the Audit Commission's Assessment Team on Friday and will be supported by a significant amount of additional information which is due to be submitted today to the Assessment Team.

As it is essential for all Elected Members to be aware of what is happening a copy of the submission tabled at the meeting will be circulated to all other Fire Authority Members on Tuesday who will be urged to read the documents and invited to make contact with specifically named Officers if they had any queries or any points of clarification to raise.

One of the critical issues associated with the CPA is the Initial Improvement Plan, which the Fire Authority/RBFRS is currently developing. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that all Members would be kept fully informed of progress.

In conclusion the Chief Fire Officer reported that the programme for the first visit of the Assessment Team on Monday 7 February 2005 would be prepared on Tuesday.

NOTED

1.04/04 BUDGET 2005/2006

The Committee received a copy (Agenda item 4 – not reproduced) of the latest Budget figures and were requested to give further consideration to the Budget requirements for 2005/2006, consider any amendments it wishes to make at this stage in the process.

Members were advised that the following Appendices support the report prepared by the Authority Treasurer:

Appendix A:	Provisional FSS and Grant for 2005/2006
Appendix B:	Budget Indications 2005/2006 to 2007/2008
Appendix C:	Revenue Bids
Appendix D:	Revenue Savings
Appendix E:	Capital Bids

Therefore on the invitation of the Chairman the Authority Treasurer took Members through the various Appendices and the following is a summary of their contents and the comments made:

Appendix A: Provisional FSS and Grant for 2005/2006

The provisional FSS, grant and Council taxbase figures were announced on 2 December 2004 and these are set out in the Appendix together with the adjusted figures for 2004/2005. In 2004/2005 the Authority's Band D Council Tax was £43.97 and the proposed Budget would increase this figure by 4.93% to £46.14.

One of the reasons why the Band D Council Tax is higher is that the Transitional Grant of £413,000 provided last year will not be repeated for the 2005/2006 financial year and as indicated in Appendix B has to be repaid during the 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 financial years.

In emphasising that the grant and taxbase figures are provisional and subject to change the Authority Treasurer (AT) confirmed that the Authority would be notified of the final figures by the end of January and if sufficient information has been received the Committee would be provided with an update at its next meeting scheduled to take place on Monday 24 January 2005.

In addition the Unitary Authorities will notify the Authority of any surpluses/deficits on their Collection Funds that will also have to be taken into account. In response to a question the AT confirmed that five out of the six Unitary Authorities have so far responded with two indicating likely deficits.

Members were reminded that Unitary Authority, Thames Valley Police Authority and

Parish/Town Council Precepts would also be added to the Fire Authority Precept, details of which would be set out in a leaflet, currently being produced, to go out with the Unitary Authorities' Council Tax demands.

In response to a request from the Chairman, Members supported the proposed 4.93% increase in the Band D Council Tax giving a figure of £46.14.

Appendix B: Budget Indications 2005/2006 to 2007/2008

In noting the Draft Budget figures for 2005/2006 and the indicative projection of needs for 2006/2007 and 2007/2008, Members were advised that as there are still several uncertainties the figures must be treated with caution and will as indicated earlier be subject to revision at a later stage in the process. However the provisional Budget for 2005/2006 is £29,579m which represents a 3.44% cash increase on the Base Budget when compared with last year's approved Budget of £28.595m.

Although the ODPM has allowed Authorities to postpone the repayment of transitional grant until 2006/2007 it is recommended, as reported previously, that the sum of £200,000 be set aside in the 2005/2006 financial year, as pension deficits will add to the budgetary pressures in the following year.

It is also proposed to allocate £100,000 a year to the costs of Regional projects and preparations for Regional Control Centres. Whilst few firm figures have yet been received from the Regional Management Boards, it is anticipated that much project work on collaboration initiatives will occur in 2005/2006. In addition, extra staff and retention payments will be needed in Control as regionalisation approaches. As Members were of the opinion that the allocation of £100,000 could be subject to misinterpretation, the AT was requested to provide details in the report to the Fire Authority on what the funding is for and what it is likely to provide.

The AT advised Members that as a result of possible slippage the Capital/Leasing Costs shown as £147,000 could be reduced.

Appendix C: Revenue Bids

The Revenue Bids presented in the Appendix had been analysed and then categorised into the following:

- Category 1: Essential
- Category 2: Highly Desirable
- Category 3: Desirable

However as indicated in Appendix B only the Essential and Highly Desirable Bids had been included in the proposed 2005/2006 Budget. Those bids contained in the Desirable category would be considered in the event that further funding is identified at a later stage in the budgetary process but any such money is likely to be marginal.

The Chief Fire Officer drew Members attention to the potential revision to the Revenue Growth Appraisal as set out in his letter dated 6 January 2005 and circulated to Members. It appears that having undertaken further work on projecting operational

staff turnover for the period up to March 2006 it indicates that it may be necessary to recruit a total of thirty additional trainee fire-fighters, rather than the twenty-four indicated in the report. This would increase the cost from £58,250, as shown in the report, to £101,950, a difference of £43,700 which would have to be met by deferring some existing Budget Bids or increasing the proposed savings for the coming year.

With this in mind it is possible that the proposed Oxygen Therapy shown under the Highly Desirable category in the sum of £6,000 may be withdrawn as we may be able to identify the required funding from within the 2004/2005 approved Budget. Members welcomed the Brigades continuing commitment to Community Safety as indicated in Appendix C.

Appendix D: Revenue Savings

Having sought clarification on some of the proposed savings the Committee supported the savings, in the sum of £139,000, as set out in Appendix D.

Appendix E: Capital Bids

The Authority has been notified that it will receive £726,000 of Government borrowing support, a reduction of £4,000 when compared with the support received in 2004/2005.

In response to a question regarding the sum of money allocated to the IT hardware replacement programme, Members were advised that the Brigade has a strategy of replacing its IT hardware every three years but due to the expansion in the number of PCs it has not been possible to meet its target in either PC hardware, printers or software. The situation was further exacerbated last year when the IT replacement programme was slipped from the Capital Programme. In addition the Brigade now has a number of PCs that are over five years old and the quality of printing from some of the printers is less than satisfactory.

It was emphasised that without investment being made in replacement hardware, warranties will expire and the Brigade could be liable to additional expenditure in future years. Although difficult to quantify at this time it is believed that hardware costs will soon be recovered by savings in management time and improved effectiveness.

Members also noted and supported the sum of £450,000 allocated to Premises Management.

Conclusions

The Chief Fire Officer indicated that apart from some minor tweaking he would expect the Budget to be as set out in the Appendices.

RESOLVED: That the Fire Authority's budgetary requirements for 2005/2006 as set out in the Appendices be approved in principle and referred back to the Executive Committee at its meeting on Monday 24 January 2005 for final consideration and referral to the Fire Authority meeting in February 2005.

1.05/05 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was **Noted** that the next meeting of the Executive Committee would be held on Monday 24 January 2005 at Brigade Headquarters commencing at 6.30pm.

1.06/05 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A of the said Act indicated:

	Agenda item	Paragraph
7	Part II Minutes – Monday 29 November 2004	1, 7 & 8
8	Chief Fire Officer's 2004 Salary Review	1

(Note: The following is a summary of the items considered in the Part II Agenda of the Fire Authority's Executive Committee meeting held on Monday 10 January 2005)

1.07/05 PART II MINUTES: 29 NOVEMBER 2004

The Part II Minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 29 November 2004 were received and approved as a correct record.

(Note: Before the Committee considered the next item and with the exception of the Director of Human Resources and Clerk and Monitoring Officer, the Chief Fire Officer and other Officers present withdrew from the meeting).

1.08/05 CHIEF FIRE OFFICER'S 2004 SALARY REVIEW

The Committee approved the Chief Fire Officer's 2004 salary review following appraisal by the Fire Authority's Chairman and Vice Chairman.