

## MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - PART I



Held on Wednesday 11 February 2009

Board Room, Bracknell Forest Borough Council, Easthampstead  
House, Town Square, Bracknell, Berkshire, RG12 1AQ

**Those present:** Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson (Vice-Chairman, Fire Authority)  
Councillor Colin Dudley (Member, Fire Authority)  
Councillor Jagjit Grewal (Member, Fire Authority)  
Councillor Fred Pugh (Member, Fire Authority) (*part meeting*)  
Councillor Angus Ross (Member, Fire Authority)

**In attendance:** Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer)  
Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)  
Caroline Redzikowska (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)

### Action

#### 02.01.09 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the Chairman, Councillor Dr Paul Bryant, and Councillor Jeff Brooks (Member, Fire Authority). **The Vice-Chairman, Councillor Christine Bateson, took the Chair for the meeting.** Councillor Fred Pugh joined the meeting during the early considerations of item 02.03.09 (Review of structure of Fire Authority) and he conveyed his apologies for being slightly late to the meeting.

#### 02.02.09 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

#### 02.03.09 REVIEW OF STRUCTURE OF FIRE AUTHORITY

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer gave a presentation entitled 'Fire Authority Structure - Are We Fit For Purpose?' (*copy available from the Committee Manager*).

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer referred Members to the findings of the recently conducted Member survey. She advised of the current number of Local Government Electors, as at December 2008, which she stated would realise a change in the number of allocated seats for 2 Unitary Authorities; however, one Unitary Authority had subsequently advised her of amended figures, which, if verified, would result in a change to the presented allocation of seats for The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Reading Borough Council who would go to 4 seats each, if the Fire Authority remained at 25 seats.

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer then presented options for how the number of seats would be allocated should the Fire Authority go to either 22 seats and 16 seats in total, options for how the current Fire Authority's Committee structure could be changed to reflect more the needs of the Authority, how Member

involvement might be designated to the Committees, and how the role of Champions, and Officer Links, might be developed.

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer advised that, in her opinion, it might be prudent, should the Fire Authority wish to make any changes to its total number of allocated seats, to make these changes this year as there were no elections taking place in May 2009.

The Chief Fire Officer welcomed the presented options for changes to the Committee structure, and believed that it would be timely for the Fire Authority to review its overall seat allocation.

Members considered the options presented, the salient points being:

- Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson advised of the Fire Authority Chairman's view, in his absence, that more time might be needed to consider the total number of seats, that this would also need to be considered with the Unitary Authority Party Groups, and, therefore, any recommendations to the Fire Authority be taken in February 2010. She stated that the Chairman felt that the Committee structure options could be presented to the Executive Committee on 23 March 2009, with any recommendations being presented to the annual meeting of the Fire Authority in June 2009.
- Councillor Colin Dudley supported a move towards 22 Member seats on the Fire Authority.
- Councillor Colin Dudley supported the Committee structure options presented, and this was also supported by Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson.
- Members recognised the benefits of proactive Champions, however acknowledged that these roles might, within the current proposals, realise a disproportionate workload.
- In response to Councillor Jagjit Grewal, the Clerk and Monitoring Officer felt that it might also be timely for the Fire Authority to review its Member Allowances in terms of Member involvement and how special responsibilities might be remunerated should it decide to make any changes to its Committee structure. Councillor Colin Dudley felt that a move towards 22 seats in total might also encourage more actively involved Members across the Authority.
- Members recognised that their respective Unitary Authorities would need to be consulted prior to any decision being taken by the Fire Authority in respect to total number of allocated Member seats.
- Councillor Angus Ross supported the need to review the total number of Member seats on the Fire Authority, but noted his concern in respect to whether reaching a final decision by April 2009 might be too early.
- Councillor Angus Ross supported the Committee structure options presented, and suggested that Members should seek the views of their respective Unitary Authorities.

**The Executive Committee:**

- **Recommended** that a review of the size of the Authority be progressed, subject to consultation with respective Party Groups and Unitary Authorities, but **Noted** its early reservations that it might be prudent to assign a longer period of time to carry out this review. **CMO**
  
- **Directed** the Clerk and Monitoring Officer to present, in more detail, the options for 16, 22 and 25 Fire Authority seats to the next meeting of the Executive Committee, for further consideration and subsequent recommendation to the full Fire Authority. **CMO**  
Agenda  
23.03.09
  
- **Fully supported** the presented options for changes to the Committee structure, and directed the Clerk and Monitoring Officer to present these options in more detail to the next meeting, for further consideration and subsequent recommendation to the full Fire Authority. **CMO**  
Agenda  
23.03.09
  
- **Recommended** that the Clerk and Monitoring Officer should also provide, at the next meeting, indicative numbers of Committee Member places for the presented options, based on the current political balance. **CMO**
  
- **Directed** the Clerk and Monitoring Officer to write to all Fire Authority Members to advise them that the Executive Committee, at its meeting on 23 March 2009, would be considering options for the size of the Fire Authority and the Authority's Committee structure, and to advise them that, subject to any recommendations by the Executive Committee, a meeting of the full Fire Authority would be called in April 2009 (date to be confirmed). **CMO**

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that he, and the Clerk and Monitoring Officer would be happy to meet with any Member who wished to discuss these issues further.

**02.04.09 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**The Executive Committee Noted** that the next meeting would take place on Monday 23 March 2009 at 6.30pm in the Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.