

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

Held on Wednesday 13 February 2008

Council Chamber, Wokingham Borough Council, Civic Offices
Shute End, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 1BN



Those present: Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Jeff Brooks (Vice-Chairman, Fire Authority)
Councillor Dr Paul Bryant (Chairman, Fire Authority) (*Chairman*)
Councillor Tom Crisp (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Colin Dudley (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Angus Ross (Member, Fire Authority)

In attendance: Olaf Baars (Deputy Chief Fire Officer)
Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer)
Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
Richard Taylor (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
Des Tidbury (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)
David Wallace (Director of Human Resources)

Observers: Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Officers
Representatives from the Fire Brigades Union
Representative from UNISON

The Chairman stated that he was of the opinion that there were special circumstances as to why the reports to this Extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee should be considered as a matter of urgency, which were that, the approval of the Optimisation of Crewing Policy needed to be considered by the Executive Committee before the Fire Authority could make a decision on the proposals submitted by the Fire Brigades Union concerning the crewing arrangements at Wokingham Fire Station as part of the budget proposals to be considered by the Fire Authority at its meeting at 6.30pm on 13 February 2008.

02.01.08 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

02.02.08 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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

**02.03.08 INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN - FIRE BRIGADES
UNION'S PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVED CREWING AT WOKINGHAM**

The Executive Committee was advised of the Fire Brigades Union's proposals for improved crewing at Wokingham Fire Station in order to inform the budget

Action

setting process for 2008/09 to be discussed at the full Fire Authority meeting on 13 February 2008, and of the work conducted by Officers, as directed by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, to explore in more detail a financial plan, as provided by the Fire Brigades Union, to improve crewing at Wokingham Fire Station over the coming year.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer took the Committee through the report and the Options presented, and he re-affirmed that both the Officers and the Fire Brigades Union were seeking to improve crewing levels at Wokingham Fire Station.

The Chief Fire Officer, by way of an illustrative presentation (*copy available from the Committee Manager*) reminded Members of Wokingham Fire Station's original establishment, and the current establishment with two extra firefighters from savings from Sonning Fire Station. He described both the Integrated Risk Management Plan's savings' option for the projected establishment from Sonning Fire Station and the Fire Brigade Union's proposal for the projected establishment using additional savings from overtime and mobilisation changes. He also detailed the anticipated timeline for both the Management's and Fire Brigades Union's propositions.

Eduardo Cardoso (Fire Brigades Union), at the request of the Chairman, addressed the Committee and, on behalf of the Fire Brigades Union, he put forward a further Option for consideration (Option 5), as follows:

- "As per the attached Appendix A (*of the report presented*), with the £38k savings realised from the Optimisation of Crewing Policy being used towards the cost of improving the service. This will leave a £24k shortfall which will be realised by the Wokingham appliance being mobilised as a wholetime appliance during the day hours. The above option will ensure that the Brigade will not have to add to its base budget by using the £99k council tax collection surplus. In addition, the Fire Brigades Union believe that the Brigade will be able to realise further savings which will allow it to incrementally increase the crewing levels in the future for consideration".

A copy of the Fire Brigades Union's position on the Integrated Risk Management Plan costings for Wokingham Fire Station was circulated to the Committee (*copy available from the Committee Manager*).

The Vice-Chairman believed that Option 5 was merely an alternative way to fund Option 4 presented, and this was supported by the Chief Fire Officer.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer clarified that, within the proposed 2008/09 budget, £180k of capital costs had been identified to achieve the interim improvements to Wokingham Fire Station; however there might be an opportunity to rent some office accommodation adjoining the station which might realise capital costs of £40k for the interim improvements as opposed to the aforementioned costs, although this proposal had yet to be fully investigated and may not prove viable. He was hopeful that this would be known by June 2008.

Councillor Colin Dudley was concerned that the general morale of the Bracknell Retained Duty System personnel might be affected as the Wokingham fire appliance was being used as an additional appliance at Bracknell to achieve the savings.

The Vice-Chairman moved that Option 4 be agreed, and this was seconded by Councillor Angus Ross. The Chairman suggested that, should Option 4 be

progressed, the Property and Property Resources Committee might wish to consider the accommodation issues relating to Wokingham Fire Station and also the cost implications resulting from any alterations to this fire station. The Chief Fire Officer stated that Officers would support Option 4 but with the caveat that it would be prudent not to commit financially to this Option until the firefighters pay award was known, which was expected by July 2008, by this time it was predicted that the picture would be clearer on the other savings forecast.

The Executive Committee:

- **Unanimously Agreed** to progress with Option 4 (to utilise the savings from the closure of Sonning Fire Station, incorporate the savings from the shift change proposals of £31k, add a further £60k from the Council Tax collection surplus bringing the crewing at Wokingham Fire Station up to 11 in line with the Fire Brigades Union's proposals).

02.04.08 OPTIMISATION OF CREWING - REVISED POLICY

The Executive Committee's approval was sought to adopt the Optimisation of Crewing Policy that reflected the statutory duties within the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (FRSA) Safe Systems of Work and the efficient management of the Authority's operational resources.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer took the Committee through the report presented. He was pleased to report that the Optimisation of Crewing Policy had proven effective and was working well, and reported that the expected £40k cashable savings through the reduction in standby duties within the first year of operation were now expected to realise in the region of £70k of savings. He also re-affirmed that appropriate action had been taken by Management to address the issues pertaining to the granting of leave.

The Executive Committee:

- **Unanimously Adopted** the revised Optimisation of Crewing Policy for immediate implementation.
- **Directed** Officers to work jointly with Representative Bodies to discuss the detail and to investigate ways to further enhance the adopted Policy without further reference to the Executive Committee.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Executive Committee, conveyed his thanks to the Fire Brigades Union and Officers for their joint cooperation and for the work conducted to realise both the improved crewing at Wokingham Fire Station and the Optimisation of Crewing Policy.

02.05.08 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Executive Committee Noted that the next meeting would take place on Monday 17 March 2008 at 6.30pm in the Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.