

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



Held on Monday 15 May 2006

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

Those present: Councillor Jeff Brooks (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Christine Bateson (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Dr Paul Bryant (Chairman, Fire Authority) (*Chairman*)
Councillor James Mole (Vice-Chairman, Fire Authority) (*Vice-Chairman*)

In attendance: Olaf Baars (Deputy Chief Fire Officer)
Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer)
John Daly (Facilities Officer)
Leslie Gollop (Senior Divisional Officer, Support Services)
Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
Rosemary Lansdowne (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
Paul Southern (Senior Divisional Officer, Service Delivery)
Nicole Targett (Corporate Communications Manager)
Des Tidbury (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)
David Wallace (Director of Human Resources)

In audience: Trade Union representatives
One Firefighter
Two media representatives
Mr Richard Coates (Resident of Horton)

04.01.06 MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee noted:

- ***That Councillor Mike Adams had been appointed as a Member of the Executive Committee*** and takes up this appointment in the place of Councillor Ms Christine Borgars.

04.02.06 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Mike Adams (Member, Fire Authority) and Councillor Barrie Patman (Member, Fire Authority).

04.03.06 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.

Action

04.04.06 PART I MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 13 MARCH 2006

The Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 13 March 2006 were **approved** by the Executive Committee for signing by the Chairman as a correct record.

04.05.06 DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2006-2007

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) reported that the draft Corporate Plan (2006-2007) had been prepared in the same format to previous years, and noted that some minor amendments, including changes to the performance figures, would be made prior to publication.

The Chairman asked that the following amendments be made:

- The terminology to be consistent throughout, particularly with regard to references made to Combined Fire Authority and/or Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, and to Brigade and/or Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- Page 8 - Methods for Consultation - remove brackets around "and workforce".
- Page 21 - references to abbreviations to be written in full.

Councillor Mrs Bateson referred to the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPI) 207 (*number of fires in non-domestic premises per 1,000 non-domestic premises*) and asked if the 2005/06 performance figure (27.1%) was rather high. The CFO noted that, although this was close to the target figure, it was hoped to reduce this, and that action was being taken to address this. He agreed to verify the figure presented.

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Councillor Mrs Bateson noted the decrease in performance for BVPI 146 (iii) (*number of calls to malicious false alarms attended per 1,000 population*) and the increase in performance for BVPI 149(i) (*false alarms caused by automatic fire detection apparatus per 1,000 non-domestic properties*), and asked what actions were being taken to address this. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) reported that a new policy had been implemented, which was heavily data driven, but that this was taking time to implement. He was confident that the benefits were now being realised.

Councillor Mrs Bateson noted that sickness levels were falling for both uniformed and non-uniformed personnel.

The Executive Committee:

- **Noted** the draft Corporate Plan and, subject to the above alterations and verification of the data, it was **resolved** that it be recommended to the Full Fire Authority for adoption at its meeting on 28 June 2006.

04.06.06 INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT 5-YEAR PLAN

With the approval of the Executive Committee, and prior to consideration to the proposals presented, the Chairman sought the Committee's agreement to an amendment of the resolutions (*as detailed below at Resolutions 1 and 2*) emanating from the report presented at Agenda Item 6 (Integrated Risk Management 5-year Plan). This was **supported**.

Resolution 1: That the Fire Authority Executive Committee be invited to recommend that the full Fire Authority, at its meeting on 28 June 2006, approve the following:

- a) The response standards set for dwelling fires and Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) be agreed.
- b) The Incident Control Unit be transferred to Maidenhead Fire Station and crewed by Retained Duty System (RDS) firefighters from Maidenhead and Cookham.
- c) The Chemical Incident Unit remains at Whitley Wood Fire Station but that a further review into the viability of this unit is undertaken in the Year IV Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

Resolution 2. That the Fire Authority Executive Committee be invited to resolve:

- **That the following recommendations require further detailed work to be conducted.**
 - **That the outcomes of which to be brought back to the Executive Committee, a special meeting to be convened if required, and subsequently to a Full Fire Authority, prior to public consultation.**
 - **That no decisions would be made prior to the further detailed work being concluded.**
 - **That the final decisions would be taken by the full Fire Authority.**
 - **That Resolution 2 be presented to the full Fire Authority for endorsement.**
- a) The Mercedes Sprinter and Pinzgauer appliances are transferred to Cookham Fire Station to replace the pumping appliance. This then becomes a specialist unit.
 - b) That Sonning Fire Station is closed with the crew being offered opportunities for re-deployment in preference to redundancy.
 - c) That work be progressed to secure a site for a new Fire Station at Twyford in readiness to transfer the unit from Wargrave to this preferred location.
 - d) Closure of Windsor Fire Station with the pump being moved to Bracknell or Wokingham (crewing with 5 or 4 depending on role).
 - e) Dee Road Fire Station is closed with the pump being moved to Caversham Road (crewing with 5 or 4 depending on role).
 - f) Efficiency savings to be utilised to achieve either two 7 crewed shifts giving cover for 12 hours per day backed up by RDS firefighters, or full 24 hour shift cover at Wokingham.
 - g) A trial is commenced to utilise Camberley's two 24 hour crewed pumps in the Crowthorne area.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) gave a presentation entitled 'IRMP 5-Year Plan' (*copy available from Lynda Kenyon, Committee Manager*). He provided a brief summary of the history, context, drivers for change and the impact of the IRMP Year II on the 5-year plan. He described the proposals, including the re-deployment of the Incident Command Unit (ICU), and the consideration given to the location of the Chemical Incident Unit (CIU). He referred to the other Year III reviews, noting that work was still ongoing. He then described what the planning assumptions had been based upon, and explained the optimum and standard response standards for dwelling fires and attendance at Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs). He noted that the evidence contained within the IRMP (Year III) was very robust, and that further work was still required to some of the proposals in order for the Fire Authority to be able to consider the future direction of travel.

The ACFO then went onto outline the key strategies for:

- Cookham Fire Station,
- Sonning and Wargrave Fire Stations,
- Windsor and Bracknell Fire Stations,
- Wokingham Fire Station,
- Crowthorne and Camberley Fire Stations,
- Dee Road and Caversham Road Fire Stations,

and presented a mapping exercise of the output areas for various options, which included comparison data for first pump response times and the impact to the local populations. He described the potential staff re-deployment opportunities, the opportunities for re-investment, and financial costs associated with each strategy, noting that the strategies presented optimised the current available resources.

The ACFO highlighted the Cadcorp revised turnout area comparisons, and noted that evidence was suggesting that improvements could be made to current response times by merely reviewing which pumps would make up the first attendance to incidents in certain areas.

The ACFO reiterated that the key strategies would be subject to a 3-month consultation period, prior to any final decision being taken by the Fire Authority.

Councillor Jeff Brooks asked for clarification in respect to the 'optimum' and 'maximum' terminology used in respect to the response standards. The ACFO provided an explanation, and confirmed that optimum was the best case standard that could be planned for.

The Chairman invited Trade Union representatives to address the Executive Committee.

On behalf of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), Lincoln Ball (Fire Brigades Union official) stated that the FBU considered that the IRMP was a tool for risk reduction, and that the FBU was supportive of how the IRMP had been approached. He was pleased that the FBU had been involved early in the development of the plan and conveyed the FBU's thanks to the Management.

Lincoln Ball stated that the FBU supported the IRMP principals, noting that available resources would be effectively utilised to provide a better service to more of the population, however there were a few concerns relating to some output areas, but that these concerns were being explored further. He reported that the FBU would like to see further detail of where the identified savings would be re-invested. He also reported that the FBU would help support the re-deployment of personnel, and would encourage the transition of Retained firefighters to Wholetime firefighters. He also stated that if the Council Tax rates were raised to provide additional finances to secure a 24-hour crewed fire appliance at Wokingham, the Windsor appliance would then not have to move.

On behalf of UNISON, Christopher Glenn (UNISON representative) hoped that consideration would be given to the ancillary staff affected by these proposals, particularly those at Dee Road.

The Chairman invited members of the public to address the Executive Committee.

Mr R Coates (a resident of Horton) referred to his letter, dated 11 May 2006, addressed to the Fire Authority Chairman, which the Chairman confirmed had been circulated to all Fire Authority Members, noting the key issues raised, the salient points as follows:

- When considering the closure of a fire station, ie Windsor fire station, consideration should be given to the provision of fire cover to outlying areas, particularly areas such as Horton, Colbrooke, Poyle and Wraysbury, and to the respective response times, which, Mr Coates felt would not be achieved if such a closure were to happen.
- Due diligence had not been taken when considering the future development, the transportation infrastructure and expected large increases to traffic around the new Terminal (5) development at Heathrow Airport, and to the increase in commercial buildings and their associated risks, particularly in the East of Berkshire.
- Proposals were for financial and not operational reasons.
- Concern that the option to increase the Council Tax to provide for an additional fire appliance at Wokingham/Bracknell, in addition to the Windsor fire appliance, had not been explored.

The ACFO recognised that there were issues relating to the optimum response standard in some areas, and noted the differences between commercial and dwelling premises in terms of risk. However, the ACFO also explained that the proposed transfer of the Windsor Pump would have no effect on first appliance attendance into Horton as this cover was provided by Langley. The ACFO noted that Junctions 5 and 6 of the M4 motorway were 'hotspots' in terms of road traffic collisions, but stated that there were 2 pumping appliances and a rescue support vehicle located at Slough Fire Station. The ACFO stated that it was not within his remit to propose an increase to Council taxes and that the IRMP was focused on maximising the effectiveness of the resources that currently existed. This was in line with the Government's expectations.

In anticipation of future development frameworks, Councillor Jeff Brooks asked whether consideration could be given to what the anticipated building developments and transportation infrastructure might be, for example, in one Unitary Authority, in order that future fire provision could be taken into account. The ACFO stated that this work had already commenced but that it had not yet been modelled in. He noted that further detailed work was still required. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) reiterated that plans could be modified when considering future planning developments, and that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) would be advocating additional fire fighting resources, if required. The DCFO also stated that RBFRS would continue to lobby local authorities and developers to install residential sprinklers in new dwellings to further reduce risk.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson referred to the data previously provided to her by the ACFO relating to the number of calls requiring Slough fire appliances to attend incidents in Windsor, and she did not believe that the data provided was a true reflection. The ACFO stated that these were just a random selection that tried to include calls during the busy traffic times, but that he would investigate a wider range of calls to reinforce the speed at which Slough could get into Windsor.

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Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson did not feel that Windsor would have sufficient fire cover if Windsor fire station were to close, and referred to the 4 million visitors to the town each year. She had concerns regarding the response standards not being achieved in peak periods. The ACFO confirmed that the strategic model provided evidence that the response times would be met for the Windsor town centre and that a greater number of people across Berkshire would be reached within the response standards.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson asked that the consultation include an option for the retainment of Windsor fire station.

Following the discussions held, the Chairman asked the Executive Committee to agree to the resolutions (amended), as detailed at Resolutions 1 and 2 above. The proposals were put to a vote:

- **Resolution 1: Unanimously agreed.**
- **Resolution 2: Carried by 3 votes for.
Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson abstained.**

04.07.06 2007/08 BUDGET PROCESS

Andrew Vallance provided a brief explanation of the recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that a Sub Committee be established to undertake a zero based budget exercise.

Andrew Vallance stated that the Sub Committee's remit would be to examine the budgets to produce a zero based budget.

The CFO proposed that Members be appointed after the Fire Authority meeting on 28 June 2006, and this was supported by Councillor Mole, however it was agreed that the Sub Committee's membership, in principle, should comprise Councillors Dr Paul Bryant, James Mole and Mrs Christine Bateson.

(Agenda -
17.07.06)

The Executive Committee:

- ***Unanimously agreed*** that a Sub Committee be set up to undertake a zero based budget exercise, as recommended by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and that an outline timetable be brought to the next Executive Committee meeting.

04.08.06 RESPONSE TO THE OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER CONSULTATION ON THE GOVERNANCE OF REGIONAL CONTROL CENTRES

The CFO referred to the proposed prepared response, noting that the main area of concern was that of governance arrangements.

Councillor Jeff Brooks felt that the response was robust, and was pleased that concerns relating to governance arrangements had been included.

The Executive Committee:

- ***Unanimously agreed*** the draft response to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Consultation on the Governance of Regional Control Centres.

04.09.06 BUDGET 2005/06 - INTERIM REPORT ON FINAL ACCOUNTS

Andrew Vallance reported that he expected there would be a year-end underspend of £150,000-£200,000, and that work was still progressing. He stated that a full report would be provided to the Fire Authority on 28 June 2006.

The Executive Committee:

- ***Noted*** the Budget 2005/2006 - Interim Report on Final Accounts.

04.10.06 CONSULTATION ON A329 INNER DISTRIBUTION ROAD ONE-WAY (ANTI-CLOCKWISE) PROPOSAL

The DCFO reported that a initial holding response had been submitted to Reading Borough Council, which had included the right to respond further once consideration had been given to the future of Dee Road fire station.

04.11.06 CREWING LEVEL MONITORING

The DCFO was pleased to report the overall improvement to crewing levels.

The Executive Committee:

- ***Noted*** the Crewing Level Monitoring report.

04.12.06 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Rosemary Lansdowne provided a summary of the report presented. She reported that, to date, 3 applications had been received for the forthcoming Independent Members' appointments.

The Executive Committee:

- **Noted and endorsed** the action taken to date in the appointment of Independent Members to the Standards Committee.

04.13.06 APPOINTMENT OF DISTRICT AUDITOR

Rosemary Lansdowne referred to the letter, dated 25 April 2006, received from the Audit Commission, and noted the good and professional working relationship enjoyed with Mike West and his team of auditors.

The Executive Committee:

- **Noted** the content of the letter, dated 25 April 2006, from the Audit Commission and **authorised** the Clerk and Monitoring Officer to reply on behalf of the Fire Authority welcoming the extension of Mick West's appointment as the appointed Auditor for the Fire Authority, and indicate that it looks forward to being consulted about the appointment of the new external auditor towards the end of 2006.

04.14.06 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Executive Committee meeting is scheduled to take place on:

- **Monday 17 July 2006 at 6.30pm**
Meeting Room 3, Brigade Headquarters

The meeting scheduled to take place on Monday 18 September 2006 will now be held on:

- **Monday 25 September 2006 at 6.30pm (Strategic Command Centre)**

04.15.06 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

The Executive Committee:

- **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, and is exempt information if, and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information:
 - Part II Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 13 March 2006
(Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3)
 - Purchase of replacement Firehoods via Framework Agreement
(Paragraph 3)
 - Award of contract for Asbestos Inspections of Brigade premises
(Paragraph 3)
 - Update on Retained Fire-fighters Employment Tribunal Claim
(Paragraphs 1 and 2)
 - Pay differentials between uniformed and non-uniformed employees
(Paragraphs 1 and 2)
 - Chief Fire Officer Salary Reviews - 2005 and 2006
(Paragraph 1)

Note: The following is a summary of the items considered in the Part II Agenda of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's Executive Committee meeting held on Monday 15 May 2006:

04.16.06 PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 13 MARCH 2006

The Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 13 March 2006 were **approved** by the Executive Committee, for signing by the Chairman as a correct record.

04.17.06 PURCHASE OF REPLACEMENT FIREHOODS VIA FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

The Executive Committee:

- **Resolved** that on the grounds of urgency and that demonstrable savings can be shown that in accordance with the Authority's Standing Orders relating to Contracts Number 10, sub para (f), that the contract be awarded to the considered provider, under the South West Fire Brigades framework agreement.

04.18.06 AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR ASBESTOS INSPECTIONS OF BRIGADE PREMISES UNDER SINGLE TENDER ACTION

The Executive Committee:

- **Unanimously agreed** the award of a contract to the considered provider for the asbestos inspection of Brigade premises and the production of Asbestos Registers.

04.19.06 UPDATE ON RETAINED FIRE-FIGHTERS EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL CLAIM

The Executive Committee:

- **Noted** the Retained Firefighters' Employment Tribunal Claim update.

04.29.06 PAY DIFFERENTIALS BETWEEN UNIFORMED AND NON-UNIFORMED EMPLOYEES

The Executive Committee:

- **Unanimously agreed** to establish a Working Party to further consider the pay differentials between non-uniformed and uniformed employees and alternatives to the information supplied by Hay Consultants, and to report back to the Executive Committee with a considered proposal.

04.21.06 CHIEF FIRE OFFICER SALARY REVIEWS - 2005 AND 2006

The Executive Committee:

- **Resolved** the salary increments for the CFO, effective from 1 April 2005 and 1 April 2006.

DW
(Agenda -
17.07.06)