

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



Held on Monday 19 March 2007

Strategic Command Centre, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue
Service Headquarters, 103 Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading,
Berkshire, RG30 4FS

Those present: Councillor Mike Adams (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Paul Bryant (Member, Fire Authority (*Chairman*))
Councillor James Mole (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Angus Ross (Member, Fire Authority)

In attendance: Jonathan Ball (Information Systems Manager) (*Item 02.05.07*)
Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer)
Becci Jefferies (Personnel Manager) (*Item 02.08.07*)
Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
Rosemary Lansdowne (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
Des Tidbury (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)
David Wallace (Director of Human Resources)

Observers: Christopher Glenn (UNISON)
Paul Southern (Area Manager, Service Delivery)
Nicole Targett (Corporate Communications Manager)

02.01.07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jeff Brooks (Member, Fire Authority).

02.02.07 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.

02.03.07 PART I MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 JANUARY 2007

The Part I Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 15 January 2007 were **Agreed** as a correct record for signing by the Chairman.

02.04.07 REVIEW OF COMPENSATION POLICY

The Executive Committee was invited to review the Fire Authority's policy for compensating employees whose employment is terminated as a result of redundancy or 'in the interests of the efficiency of the service'. This review is required to comply with the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006.

Action

The Director of Human Resources tabled a copy of a letter, dated 16 March 2007, received since the report presented was written, from Christopher Glenn (Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service UNISON Workplace Steward) detailing UNISON's response to the Compensation Policy proposals (*copy available from Lynda Kenyon, Committee Manager*). He also tabled some illustrative examples in respect to the financial impact of the options (*copy available from Lynda Kenyon, Committee Manager*), noting, however, that there was an error in the reporting figures, and that these should read:

- 2b) Statutory redundancy pay (**£310** x 14 weeks) = **£4,340**
- 3b) Statutory redundancy pay (**£310** x 27 weeks) = **£8,370**

The Director of Human Resources provided an explanation of the current Compensation Policy and the amended discretions within the Government's new Regulations governing the compensation Local Authorities can pay to employees whose employment is terminated as a result of redundancy or 'in the interests of the efficiency of the service'. He noted that, in setting its Compensation Policy, the Regulations require Local Authorities to firstly have regard to the extent to which the exercise of their discretionary powers, unless properly limited, could lead to a serious loss of confidence in the public service, and, secondly, to be satisfied that the policy was workable, affordable and reasonable having regard to the foreseeable costs.

The Director of Human Resources took the Executive Committee through the 3 options outlined in the report presented which he suggested the Members might wish to consider.

The Chairman invited Christopher Glenn (UNISON Workplace Steward) who was observing the meeting, to present UNISON's position. Christopher Glenn stated that UNISON welcomed the proposed continuation of the existing practice to waive the statutory maximum on redundancy payments and base redundancy payments on actual pay. He stated that UNISON would wish compensation payments to be inclusive of statutory redundancy pay of 3 times the statutory redundancy pay formula which would produce compensation payments based on age and service up to a maximum of 66 weeks rather than the 60 weeks maximum proposed. He asked the Executive Committee to consider the continuation of the use of compensatory added years (augmentation under Regulation 52) with additional lump sum compensation. He noted, however, the need to consider financial rationales.

Councillor Angus Ross noted the benefits of establishing a guideline level of compensation to be applied to each particular redundancy circumstance, taking into account the particular financial and other relevant circumstances, and Councillor James Mole supported this.

The Director of Human Resources noted that, in policy terms, the position with regard to compensation payments of uniformed members of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) was uncertain. He stated that the Compensation Regulations could only be applied to employees who were eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) which excluded most of the uniformed RBFRS workforce who are offered membership of the Firefighters Pension Scheme. He noted that there was, currently, uncertainty regarding the Fire Authority's powers to

offer similar compensation payments to these staff, and that this created the potential for inconsistency of treatment between the various staff groups employed by RBFRS.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson felt that it would have been helpful if an Officer's recommendation could have been included within the report, together with some indication of the direction being taken by other Fire Authorities and Unitaries. Councillor Angus Ross referred to the comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny, Committee at its meeting on 13 March 2007, that it was preferable for Officers to make a formal recommendation to Members.

The Director of Human Resources recommended that the Executive Committee defer their decision until he had had the opportunity to seek further clarification regarding the compensatory issues pertaining to uniformed personnel, and that a firm proposal be presented to the next Executive Committee to enable an informed decision to then be made. He also recommended, in the interim, the continuance of the current policy of considering each case on its merits, taking into account the particular financial circumstances. Councillor James Mole supported this proposal, and asked that comparison data with other Authorities also be presented to enable the Executive Committee to ensure that the Fire Authority was not disadvantaging its staff.

The **Executive Committee:**

- **Noted** the Government's new Regulations governing the compensation Local Authorities can pay to employees whose employment is terminated as a result of redundancy or 'in the interests of the efficiency of the 'service'.
- **Agreed** that the Director of Human Resources should further seek the views of the Fire Brigades Union. **DHR**
- **Agreed** that the Director of Human Resources should seek the position of other Fire and Rescue Services and Local Unitaries within the South East. **DHR**
- **Agreed** that the Director of Human Resources present a firm proposal to the next meeting. **DHR**
- **Agreed** to defer its decision on a new policy until the next meeting of the Executive Committee, and, in the interim, to maintain the Fire Authority's current Compensation policy of considering each case on its merits, taking account of the financial circumstances. Agenda
21.05.07

02.05.07 IT AND COMMUNICATIONS EXPENDITURE 2007/08

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer introduced Jonathan Ball (Information Systems Manager). Jonathan Ball confirmed that the financial figures detailed in the report presented were estimations as the confirmed figures were not yet known, and that only those items of expenditure over £10,000 had been included. He advised the Executive Committee of the proposed Information Technology (IT) and Communications expenditure for 2007-2008. He took Members through the major items of expenditure in IT and Communications for the period 2007-2010, and provided an explanation of the breakdown of the IT Systems development and maintenance costs, IT hardware upgrades, and the development and maintenance expenditure for communications.

Following a question from Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the RBFRS Control costs were £1million per year. He stated that, nationally, FiReControl was expected to save 28% of the existing costs, and that, before any apportionment or adjustment, the RBFRS's anticipated savings would be £28k.

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed his support of the report presented. The Authority Treasurer also supported the report, however he noted that Officers would need to consider the financial principles of the Framework Agreements.

Councillor Angus Ross alluded to the Overview and Scrutiny's concerns, at its meeting held on 13 March 2007, that the Executive Committee should carefully consider recommendation 2b)ii) and that it should consider what expenditure should be delegated to Officers without future scrutiny by the Executive Committee. Jonathan Ball confirmed that the recommendation contained at 2b)ii) related to contracts negotiated on behalf of the Fire Authority.

The Executive Committee:

- **Noted** that whole life costs should be considered within the contracts.
- **Noted** the effect on expenditure of the FireLink and FiReControl annual Project Management expenditure on IT systems' upgrades, as detailed in Sections 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 of the report presented.
- In accordance with Standing Orders 10a (where only one company is considered suitable), 10b (where the contract can only be undertaken by one contractor), and 10f (where there are demonstrable benefits):
 - **Endorsed** the expenditure for 2007/08 within the defined limits, as detailed in Sections 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 of the report.
 - **Endorsed** that IT and Communications can make use of pre-tendered contracts without further reference to the Executive Committee, subject to budgetary prerequisites.
- **Agreed** that the IT and Communications Expenditure be monitored by the Executive Committee.

Future
Agendas

02.06.07 SUMMARY OF BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2007/08 (DRAFT VERSION)

The Executive Committee's approval was sought for the draft version of the Summary of the Best Value Performance Plan 2007/08.

The Executive Committee:

- **Approved in principle** the draft version of the Summary of the Best Value Performance Plan 2007/08, subject to any changes to the figures presented.

02.07.07 2006/07 BUDGET MONITORING

The Authority Treasurer informed the Executive Committee of the revenue and capital expenditure against budgets up to the end of December 2006, and noted the additional income received so far this year. He referred specifically to the use of the pension income, as detailed in paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 of the report presented. He anticipated that there would be slight underspend at year-end.

The **Executive Committee Noted** the report.

02.08.07 HUMAN RESOURCES MONITORING REPORT - RETIREMENTS, ACCIDENTS, SICKNESS, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY AND RETENTION

The Director of Human Resources introduced Becci Jefferies (Personnel Manager) who took Members through the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's staff retention, medical retirements, workplace accidents and sickness absences during the period April 2006 - September 2006, as detailed in the report presented.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson was pleased to note that there had been a decrease to retirements on medical grounds.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson felt it would be beneficial to share, with staff, the information contained within the data tables and graphs. Becci Jefferies confirmed that the Health, Safety and Welfare Committee considered the data, and that all fire stations received comparative monitoring figures. The Chief Fire Officer stated that the data was also available on the website. The Chairman felt that it would be helpful to have comparative data with other Fire and Rescue Services. Becci Jefferies stated that benchmarking data was taken from the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) survey.

The **Executive Committee Noted** the report.

02.09.07 USE OF NEGOTIATING PROCEDURE IN RELATION TO PHASING OUT OF LONG SERVICE PAY

The Director of Human Resources informed the Executive Committee of the outcome of local negotiations conducted in accordance with the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Negotiation Procedure on a collective grievance regarding the phasing out of Long Service Pay. He noted his concern that confirmation was still awaited from the National Employers who were seeking confirmation from the Trustees of the Firefighters and Local Government Pension Schemes that Continuous Professional Development (CPD) payments would be pensionable.

The Director of Human Resources advised the Executive Committee that a further issue under the Negotiating Procedures for Additional Responsibility Allowances (ARAs) was also being considered.

The **Executive Committee Noted** the report.

02.10.07 AMBULANCE SHARING FIRE SERVICE FACILITIES UPDATE

The Executive Committee was updated on the progress of plans for South Central Ambulance Service, Berkshire Division, formerly Royal Berkshire Ambulance Trust, to share accommodation and facilities at Langley Fire Station (Station 18). The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Fire Brigades Union was satisfied with the way forward and that local policy issues were being resolved locally.

The **Executive Committee Noted** the report.

02.11.07 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The **Executive Committee Noted** that the next meeting would take place on **Monday 21 May 2007 at 6.30pm** (Strategic Command Centre, RBFRS's Headquarters).

02.12.07 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 15 January 2007 (*Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7.*)
- Mutual Insurance Company (*Paragraphs 1 and 3.*)
- Service Level Agreement for Property and Professional Services (*Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3.*)
- Award of Contract - Incident Command Unit (*Paragraphs 1 and 3*)
- Award of Contract - Multi-role Vehicle (*Paragraphs 1 and 3*)
- Award of Internal Audit Contract for 2007/08 to 2009/10 (*Paragraphs 1 and 3*)
- Proposed redundancy (*Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3*)
- Annual Review of Local Pay Ranges (*Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3*)
- Three-month progress update on Term and Reactive Maintenance Contracts (*Paragraph 1*)

Note: **The following is a summary of the items considered in the Part II Agenda:**

02.13.07 PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 JANUARY 2007

The Part II Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 15 January 2007 were **Agreed** as a correct record for signing by the Chairman.

02.14.07 MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY

The Executive Committee was informed of the latest developments in the creation of the Mutual Insurance Company. The **Executive Committee Agreed** the recommendation presented.

02.15.07 SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT FOR PROPERTY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

The Executive Committee's agreement was sought to enter into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) to provide a comprehensive range of property and other professional services. The **Executive Committee Agreed** the recommendation presented.

02.16.07 AWARD OF CONTRACT - INCIDENT COMMAND UNIT

The Executive Committee's approval was sought for the award of a contract to supply the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority with a replacement Incident Command Unit (ICU) including both vehicle and information and communication technology. The **Executive Committee Agreed** the recommendation presented.

02.17.07 AWARD OF CONTRACT - MULTI-ROLE VEHICLE

The Executive Committee's approval was sought for the award of a contract to supply the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority with a Multi-Role Vehicle including coach building and information and communication technology. The **Executive Committee Agreed** the recommendation presented.

02.18.07 AWARD OF INTERNAL AUDIT CONTRACT FOR 2007/08 TO 2009/10

The Executive Committee's approval was sought to the award of the internal audit contract. The **Executive Committee Agreed** the recommendation presented.

02.19.07 PROPOSED REDUNDANCY

The **Executive Committee Agreed** recommendations 1 and 3, and **Agreed** the severance terms.

02.20.07 ANNUAL REVIEW OF LOCAL PAY RANGES

The Executive Committee's approval was sought for the revised pay ranges for specific staff groups, to take effect from 1 April 2007. The **Executive Committee Resolved** the recommendation presented.

02.21.07 THREE-MONTH PROGRESS UPDATE ON TERM AND REACTIVE MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS

The Executive Committee was updated on the term and maintenance contracts set up. The **Executive Committee Noted** the report.

As this was the last Executive Committee meeting before the May 2007 elections, the Chairman conveyed his thanks to the Executive Committee Members.