

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



Held on Monday 19 November 2007

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

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

In attendance: Olaf Baars (Deputy Chief Fire Officer)
Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer)
Becci Jefferies (Personnel Manager) (*Item 06.13.07*)
Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
Nicole Targett (Corporate Communications Manager) (*Item 06.07.07*)
Richard Taylor (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
Des Tidbury (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)
David Wallace (Director of Human Resources)

Observer: Christopher Glenn (UNISON) (*Item 06.05.07*)

06.01.07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jeff Brooks (Vice-Chairman).

06.02.07 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.

06.03.07 PART I MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2007

The following amendment was made to the Minutes:

- 05.01.07 (Apologies for Absence) - amend first sentence to now read "Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jeff Brooks (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Tom Crisp (Member, Fire Authority) and Councillor Colin Dudley (Member, Fire Authority)."

The Part I Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 17 September 2007 were then **Agreed** as a correct record for signing by the Chairman, subject to the above amendment.

Action

Councillor Angus Ross joined the meeting.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that the issues raised by the Fire Brigades Union at the last meeting in respect to the Optimisation of Crewing (05.11.07) had not yet been considered by Management, as the Round Table meeting between Management and the Fire Brigades Union representatives had been cancelled at the Fire Brigades Union's request. He gave his assurance that this would be progressed, and the Executive Committee would be advised, as appropriate.

The Executive Committee Noted that all the identified actions from the last meeting had been addressed.

06.04.07 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman advised that he had, together with the Chief Fire Officer and Councillor Angus Ross attended a 'Safe Drive Stay Alive' show on 12 November 2007 which had been a very useful educational event. He encouraged all Fire Authority Members to attend similarly held events in the future.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson joined the meeting.

The Chairman tabled a copy of his letter, dated 7 November 2007, (*copy available from the Committee Manager*) to Mr Hill (Chairman of the Pensions Committee, Communities and Local Government) regarding "Ill health retirement under the Firefighters' Pension Scheme", and reported that he had not yet received a response. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) had raised this issue directly with the responsible Minister, and that he would advise the Executive Committee Members of any developments.

CFO

The Chairman reported that he had recently attended, with the Chief Fire Officer, a Sprinkler Launch Strategy event hosted by Kent Fire and Rescue Service. He alluded to the work being conducted in this area, and stated that he would like the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority to affect a more assertive sprinkler campaign, by, for example, Officer attendance at appropriate Unitary meetings. The Chief Fire Officer supported the Chairman's proposal that they jointly consider a set of proposals on how to progress this and present these to the next Executive Committee for consideration.

**Chairman
/ CFO
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21.01.08**

The Chairman agreed to a request from Councillor Angus Ross to advise the Executive Committee of the salient issues from the inaugural meeting of the South East Fire and Rescue Control Centre Ltd. He advised that he, together with Councillor Peter Jones (West Sussex County Council), had been appointed to the Appointments Panel and that the Panel had recently met to make some key appointments. After due consideration by the Executive Committee to a number of issues pertaining to the governance arrangements for the South East Fire and Rescue Control Centre Ltd, the Chief Fire Officer agreed to prepare a letter to the South East Fire and Rescue Control Centre Ltd Company Secretary requesting clarification to the following issues:

CFO

- Could a named Fire Authority Member substitute for the elected Fire Authority Member representative attend the meetings of the South East Fire and Rescue Control Centre Ltd as an observer?

- Were the meetings of the South East Fire and Rescue Control Centre Ltd open to the public, and what was the viability of having a Part I and a Part II meeting?

The Chairman proposed that the Executive Committee receive a South East Fire and Rescue Control Centre Ltd update from Councillor Angus Ross at each meeting, and this was **Unanimously Supported**.

Standing
Agenda Item

06.05.07 REVIEW OF COMPENSATION POLICY

The Executive Committee's approval was sought for a revised Fire Authority Policy for compensating staff whose employment is terminated as a result of redundancy or "in the interests of the efficiency of the Service", following discussions at the meetings of the Executive Committee on 19 March 2007 and 9 July 2007 and a meeting of Fire Authority Party Leaders on 17 September 2007.

The Director of Human Resources provided a summary of the report presented, including the Party Leader's proposals, as detailed at section 3.2 of the report. He reminded the Executive Committee of the levels of compensation adopted by Berkshire Local Authorities and other South East Fire and Rescue Authorities as reported on 9 July 2007.

The Chairman invited Christopher Glenn (UNISON) to address the Executive Committee. Christopher Glenn urged the Executive Committee to be as generous as possible when determining the compensation levels in redundancy cases.

In response to a question from Councillor Colin Dudley, the Director of Human Resources confirmed that the financial implications of any potential redundancies were factored into the Fire Authority's budget during the considerations of the particular issues.

The Chairman invited the Executive Committee Members to state their preferred standard level of compensation based on age and length of service in respect to redundancy cases, as follows:

- Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson and Councillor Angus Ross - one and half times the Statutory Redundancy Pay Table.
- Councillor Tom Crisp and the Chairman - two times the Statutory Redundancy Pay Table.
- Councillor Colin Dudley - two and a half times the Statutory Redundancy Pay Table.

Councillor Colin Dudley proposed that the Executive Committee agree on a standard level of compensation based on age and length of service of two times the Statutory Redundancy Pay Table, and this was seconded by Councillor Tom Crisp.

The Executive Committee Unanimously Resolved that:

- The Fire Authority adopts the following policy with regard to the exercise of the discretions contained in the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006:-
 - (i) to waive the statutory maximum week's pay for the calculation of redundancy payments (currently £310 per week).

- (ii) in redundancy cases, the standard level of compensation based on age and length of service be set at two times the Statutory Redundancy Pay Table.
 - (iii) in “efficiency cases”, consideration be given to a one-off payment based on the merits of each individual case, up to the maximum permitted under the Compensation Regulations. Factors to be taken into account in determining compensation in individual cases would be overall reasonableness (including benefits to Council Taxpayers) of the employee leaving Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, direct financial savings arising from the employee leaving the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and employee relations’ considerations.
- The Fire Authority requests that the Department of Communities and Local Government addresses the current anomaly regarding compensation arrangements between the Fire Authority’s employees who are offered membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme and those who are offered membership of the Firefighters’ Pension Scheme and New Firefighters’ Pension Scheme so that all the Fire Authority’s employees are subject to the same compensation policy.

06.06.07 2007/08 BUDGET MONITORING

The Executive Committee was advised of the revenue and capital expenditure against budgets, up to the end of October 2007, and was invited to note and agree to the release of the inflation contingency fund.

The **Executive Committee Noted** that the reference made in Section 3, paragraph 8 to the contractor’s name should not have been recorded within the report, as agreement for the system’s contract had yet to be sought in Part II of the Agenda.

The Authority Treasurer introduced the report presented, and reported that he expected that there would be a slight underspend at year-end. He tabled a further appendage to Appendix C (types of expenditure contained within Supplies - Other) which provided a monetary figure breakdown (*copy available from the Committee Manager*). The Chairman asked the Authority Treasurer to provide cross-references within future report appendices in relation to the ‘General Premises’.

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The Authority Treasurer referred to the inflation contingency fund and the Executive Committee considered the proposed allocation of this fund.

The Executive Committee:

- **Noted** the 2007/08 Budget Monitoring report.
- **Unanimously Agreed** to the release of the inflation contingency fund, as detailed at Section 3, paragraph 8 of the report presented.

06.07.07 MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

The Executive Committee’s approval was sought for a Bulletin to provide Fire Authority Members with information on a regular basis.

Nicole Targett (Corporate Communications Manager) introduced the report presented, and after due consideration of the proposals presented, the **Executive Committee unanimously:**

- **Recognised** the benefit of the introduction of a Bulletin to provide Fire Authority Members with information on a regular basis.
- **Agreed** that a Members' Communications Champion be sought from the Fire Authority Members.
- **Approved** the development of a Bulletin to provide Fire Authority Members with a regular source of information on items of interest, the format to be considered by the Corporate Communications Manager and the Member Communications Champion, and that this should be circulated by E-mail, or as a hard copy at a Member's request.
- **Agreed** that a quarterly newsletter publication for partner organisations, interested parties and Representative Bodies should also be developed.

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Fire Authority
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12.12.07

06.08.07 COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CLG) PROPOSALS FOR FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

The Executive Committee was advised of the request from the CLG for support, in principle, for interim funding for various initiatives under the 'Centre of Excellence' project, and was invited to note the letter of 24 October 2007 from Peter Betts (Director of Fire and Resilience, Communities and Local Government) and to consider what response the Fire Authority would wish to be made.

The Chief Fire Officer apologised for an error in the report presented in that the £25,000 pa to support functions which were currently funded as schemes delivered as 'Centre of Excellence' developments by the CLG did not, in fact, include the Firebuy procurement project. He commended the Organisations Development Centre support to the Integrated Personal Development Scheme and the IT support for the Fire Gateway web portal, however he believed that further clarity in respect to the governance arrangements for these functions was required prior to any financial commitment by Fire Authorities. This was supported by the Chairman. The Chief Fire Officer also believed that the Firebuy procurement project should be self-funding.

The Chairman alluded to the CLG's consultation questionnaire and suggested that he and the Chief Fire Officer should co-ordinate their respective responses and write to the Regional Management Board.

**CFO /
Chairman**

The **Executive Committee:**

- **Noted** the letter of 24 October 2007 from Peter Betts regarding the Fire and Rescue Service Funding Requirement in 2008/09.
- **Recommended** that the Chief Fire Officer should respond to Peter Betts' letter stating that, although the Fire Authority appreciated that some Centre of Excellence development schemes should be funded at national level, the Fire Authority could not, at the current time, support the proposals, as detailed in his letter, as there was insufficient clarity in respect to the governance arrangements,

CFO

and that the Fire Authority would only be prepared to consider financially supporting such schemes if it could be demonstrated that they provided value for money.

06.09.07 ADDITIONAL RESEARCH ON THE PROVISION OF STATION COOKS

The Executive Committee was provided with additional research into the provision and use of station cooks on wholetime fire stations, as commissioned by the Committee at its meeting on 17 September 2007, and was invited to consider the report and refer the paper to the 2008/09 Budget Sub Committee for consideration.

The Chairman invited Christopher Glenn (UNISON) to address the Executive Committee. Christopher Glenn requested that he be given the opportunity to submit a response on behalf of UNISON to the 2008/09 Budget Sub Committee. He asked that the Executive Committee might wish to consider, as a further option, natural personnel wastage. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the financial implications of this could be presented as an option for consideration.

After due consideration of whether the Executive Committee should provide any steerage to the 2008/09 Budget Sub Committee, the **Chairman proposed that the report be referred to the 2008/09 Budget Sub Committee for consideration, and that 2008/09 Budget Sub Committee be given a steer that, from the evidence presented, the position of the station cooks was believed to be untenable**, and this was seconded by Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson. On being put to the vote, this was **carried by a vote of four in favour to one against**. Councillor Colin Dudley asked that his vote against be recorded.

06.10.07 FORWARD PLAN

The Executive Committee was invited to consider the format of a formal Forward Plan for the Fire Authority and its Committees, and to consider the proposals set out in the report presented for a Forward Plan for the Fire Authority and its Committees.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson felt that there should be method of recording the reasons for any meeting/decision deferrals, and the Chief Fire Officer and the Committee Manager agreed to consider this.

CFO / CM

The **Executive Committee:**

- **Unanimously Agreed** to the proposals set out in the report presented for a Forward Plan for the Fire Authority and its Committees.

06.11.07 OPTIMISATION OF CREWING - REVISED POLICY

The Executive Committee was advised of the background to, and performance of the revised Optimisation of Crewing Policy that was currently undergoing a six-month trial period. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer tabled an updated report which incorporated the actual outturn figures for October 2007 in respect to the shift crewing performance, the incident crewing performance, and the causes of crewing at four riders (*copy available from the Committee Manager*). He noted that the tabled report also incorporated some corrected data relating to crewing performance.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that the data demonstrated that the Optimisation of Crewing Policy was proving effective and that improvements and savings were being achieved.

The Executive Committee:

- **Noted** the Optimisation of Crewing - revised Policy report.

06.12.07 REVISED GRIEVANCE POLICY AND INTRODUCTION OF AN EMPLOYEE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Executive Committee was advised of the recent changes to the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's policies for dealing with grievances which would impact on the issues coming before the Fire Authority's Disciplinary, Appeals and Grievance Committee (DAG).

The Executive Committee:

- **Noted** the Revised Grievance Policy and the introduction of an Employee Complaints Procedure.

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

The Executive Committee was advised of staff retention, the number of medical retirements, workplace accidents and sickness absences during the period April 2007 - September 2007.

The Director of Human Resources introduced Becci Jefferies (Personnel Manager) who provided a summary of the report presented.

In response to a question from the Chairman regarding comparable data relating to the retention figures for Retained Duty System personnel, Becci Jefferies confirmed that other Fire and Rescue Services had fairly similar data to that of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson conveyed her congratulations to Emma Scott (Personnel Adviser) for preparing such an informative report, and this was **Unanimously Endorsed** by the Executive Committee. Becci Jefferies agreed to convey this to Emma Scott.

BJ

The Executive Committee:

- **Noted** the Human Resources Monitoring Report - Retirements, Accidents, Sickness, Equality and Diversity and Retention report.

06.14.07 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Executive Committee Noted that the next meeting would take place on Monday 21 January 2008 at 6.30pm in the Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

06.15.07 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 17 September 2007 (*Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4*).
- Employment Tribunals Application update (*Paragraphs 1 and 2*).
- Command Support System Software (*Paragraphs 1 and 3*).
- Review of Senior Managers' pay arrangements (*Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3*).
- Sonning Fire Station (*Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3*).

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

06.16.07 PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2007

The Executive Committee Approved the Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2007 for signing by the Chairman, after a minor amendment was made.

06.17.07 EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS APPLICATION UPDATE

The Executive Committee was advised of the outcome of an employee's application to the Employment Tribunal.

06.18.07 COMMAND SUPPORT SYSTEM SOFTWARE

The Executive Committee Approved the recommendation presented.

06.19.07 REVIEW OF SENIOR MANAGER PAY ARRANGEMENTS

The Executive Committee determined the future structure of Senior Manager pay and the Local Pay Ranges to be applied to Senior Managers with effect from 1 April 2007.

06.20.07 SONNING FIRE STATION

The Executive Committee Approved the recommendations presented.