

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



Held on Monday 21 January 2008

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)
Councillor Jeff Brooks (Vice-Chairman, Fire Authority) (*part meeting*)
Councillor Dr Paul Bryant (Chairman, Fire Authority) (*Chairman*)
Councillor Angus Ross (Member, Fire Authority)

In attendance: Pat Arthur (Procurement and Facilities Manager) (*Items 01.06.08 / 01.07.08*)
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)

**Representative
Bodies present:** Eduardo Cardoso (Fire Brigades Union)
Christopher Glenn (UNISON)

01.01.08 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tom Crisp (Member, Fire Authority) and Councillor Colin Dudley (Member, Fire Authority).

01.02.08 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.

01.03.08 PART I MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2007

The Part I Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 19 November 2008 were **Agreed** as a correct record for signing by the Chairman.

01.04.08 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman reported that he had recently attended a Firefighters' Passing Out Parade at Eastleigh and that he had been extremely impressed with the demonstration given. The Chief Fire Officer reported that the Silver Axe had been awarded to a Berkshire firefighter.

01.05.08 2008/09 BUDGET SUB COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee was advised of the recommendations of the Budget Sub

Action

Committee and was invited to propose a budget for 2008/09 to the Fire Authority.

The Authority Treasurer took Members through the report presented, and referred to the letter, dated 7 January 2008, to Ms Hinde (Communities and Local Government) regarding the Local Government Finance Settlement, and to the recommendations of the Budget Sub Committee, as detailed in Appendices B, C, D and E of the report presented. He also referred to the Berkshire's Council Tax Band D comparisons as detailed in Appendix F of the report.

The Authority Treasurer advised of the following updates and amendment to Appendix B (Budget 2008/09 to 2010/11) presented:

- Funding - Council Tax (adjusted to 326493.30 taxbase year 1, although this was still provisional) - now adjusted to £17,154k.
- Funding - Collection Fund surplus - now adjusted to just under £20k.
Funding - total should now read £32,444k.
- Savings declared - Appendix reference should read Appendix D.
- Total now adjusted to £32,444k (equates to an additional budget allocation for 2008/09 of £99k).

The Chairman invited the Executive Committee to comment on the budget recommended by the Budget Sub Committee, the salient comments as follows:

- In response to a question from Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson regarding the budget allocation for 2009/09 for Firebuy, the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Fire Authority should, if required, be in a position to fund this.
- Councillor Angus Ross felt it would have been helpful if the Members could have been provided with further information regarding the reasons for the Budget Sub Committee's recommendations of the bids. He also felt that consideration might wish to be given to supporting any financial pressures for next year when allocating the additional budget allocation (£99k).
- The Deputy Chief Fire Officer referred to the essential bid for Home Fire Risk Checks (SD1) or Smoke Detectors (SD2) as detailed in Appendix C of the report. He reported that, following the recent publication of a Fire Service Circular, it was now expected that the £50k for 2008/09 would be required from the base budget for Smoke Detectors.

The Executive Committee and the Representative Bodies present, at the request of the Chairman, put forward the following proposals for how the additional £99k might be apportioned:

- **Retention of Station cooks** (as suggested by Christopher Glenn, on behalf of UNISON). The Vice-Chairman advised that Christopher Glenn (UNISON) had asked the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, at the Fire Liaison Group meeting on 21 January 2008, to consider, for those Station cooks who were close to retirement, whether their respective pensions could be augmented, in the event

that the Fire Authority accepts the savings proposal in respect to Station cooks. He also advised that the Director of Human Resources had been asked to consider the costs of augmentation in order that the Fire Authority could be made aware when it considered the Station cooks' redundancy issue.

- **Increase to crewing levels at Wokingham fire station** - the Vice-Chairman referred to the revenue and capital savings which had been identified by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) which the FBU believed could provide two watches of six firefighters at Wokingham Fire Station following the implementation of Stations 8, 12 and 15 under the current Integrated Risk Management Plan. The Vice-Chairman reported that the FBU's presented financial costings had yet to be validated, but the Fire Authority might wish to support this proposal if financially viable.
- **Improvement of the capital programme for accommodation issues at Wokingham fire station** (proposed by Councillor Angus Ross). The Assistant Chief Fire Officer noted that £180k had already been allocated in the capital budget for improvements to Wokingham fire station on a temporary basis.

The Executive Committee:

- **Noted** the budget recommended by the Budget Sub Committee.
- **Agreed** to use any 2007/08 corporate underspend to set up a fund to pay for the substantial costs that would be incurred in replacing protective equipment for operational personnel from 2009/10; the cost of the new equipment would be £750,000 over three years and must be funded from revenue resources.
- **Recommended** to the Fire Authority:
 - A precept increase of 4.9%, with a Band D council tax of £52.54, resulting in the revenue budget increasing by 3.24% from £31.329million to £32.345million.
 - That the top three prioritised essential bids be supported, with any surplus money used towards funding the Premises (Maintenance and Environmental) bid.
 - That the proposed savings be accepted.
 - The capital bids presented.
 - That the additional identified budget allocation for 2008/09 of £99k be appropriately allocated, to enable a balanced budget for the year.

01.06.08 EXTENSION TO CLEANING CONTRACT

The Executive Committee's agreement was sought to extend the Cleaning Contract with Regent Cleaning Services until 31 March 2009. Pat Arthur introduced the report presented, and referred to the savings to the Fire Authority by the collaborative work with Kent County Council.

Councillor Angus Ross proposed that the Recommendation be approved and this was seconded by Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson.

The Executive Committee:

- **Unanimously Agreed** to extend the Cleaning Contract with Regent Cleaning Services until 31 March 2009.

01.07.08 THREE-MONTH EXTENSION TO SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT FOR PROPERTY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Pat Arthur introduced the report presented, and the Executive Committee's agreement was sought to a three month extension to the Service Level Agreement for Property and Professional Services until the European Union (EU) Tendering process was completed and a new contract awarded.

In response to a question from the Chairman, Pat Arthur was confident that a three month extension to the Service Level Agreement (SLA) would only be required while the tendering process for the SLA was worked through.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson proposed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitor the tendering process undertaken, and this was seconded by the Chairman.

The Executive Committee:

- **Unanimously Agreed** a three month extension to the Service Level Agreement for Property and Professional Services until the EU Tendering process was completed and a new contract awarded.
- **Recommended** that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitor the tendering process undertaken.

01.08.08 CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY: 2008-2018

The Executive Committee was invited to determine the Fire Authority's response to the Communities and Local Government consultation exercise on its proposed national Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy for 2008-2018.

The Director of Human Resources referred Members to the five key priority areas linked to the Fire and Rescue Service Core Values and the Equality Standard for Local Government, the expectations of Fire and Rescue Authorities, the current position for the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority and how these expectations were being discharged, as detailed in the report presented. He was pleased to report that the Fire Authority had already been developing a number of the expectations.

The Director of Human Resources took Members through the proposed Fire Authority's response to the Consultation, as detailed in Section 3.6, noting the following amendment (*shown in bold type below*) to the third sentence at paragraph h) which should now read:

- "The scale of change in perceptions required is **beyond** the compass of individual Fire and Rescue Authorities or even Regional Management Boards."

The Vice-Chairman noted that the proposed response presented had not included a comment with regard to the recommendation for seeking of three yearly peer

reviews, and the **Executive Committee Agreed** that Director of Human Resources should respond to the effect that, whilst a peer review would be welcomed, it might be difficult to carry out due to resource and financial implications.

The Executive Committee:

- **Unanimously Approved** the Fire Authority's response to the Communities and Local Government Department's Consultation exercise in relation to the proposed Fire and Rescue Service equality and Diversity Strategy for 2008-2018, based on the contents of the report presented, subject to the above inclusions.

01.09.08 CONSULTATION RESPONSE PROPOSALS TO ESTABLISH A 'CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE'

The Executive Committee was invited to determine the Fire Authority's response to the Communities and Local Government Consultation exercise on its proposals for a Centre of Excellence for the Fire and Rescue Service.

The Chief Fire Officer circulated a copy of the letter from Mr Peter Betts, dated 21 December 2007, regarding the 'Requirements for funding in 2008/09 - the findings of the Pathway Group' which had not been published with the Agenda, but which was referred to in the report presented.

The Chief Fire Officer introduced the report presented and referred to the work undertaken by the Pathway Group. He also referred Members to the twelve specific questions contained within the Consultation, and to the suggested responses. After due consideration of the responses to the Consultation questions, the following amendment was suggested:

- Question 11 ("*Would your Authority be willing to contribute to funding a Centre of Excellence?*") - response to now read: "In principle no, unless, on the basis of the approximate figures given in Peter Betts' letter of 21 December 2007, subject to a proper business case, appropriate governance and, in the light of the arbitrary grant settlements, affordability."

The Vice-Chairman proposed that the final response to the Consultation be delegated to the Chairman and the Chief Fire Officer, and, should there be any further suggested amendments, that these be advised to the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer prior to sign off by 28 January 2008. He also proposed that any such amendments be advised to the Executive Committee Members prior to sign off.

The Executive Committee:

- **Unanimously Approved** the Fire Authority's response to the Communities and Local Government Department's Consultation regarding its proposals for a Centre of Excellence for the Fire and Rescue Service, as detailed in the report presented, subject to the amendment made to the response to Question 11, as detailed above.
- **Unanimously Agreed** that any further amendments be advised to the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer by 28 January 2008, for subsequent sign off, and that any such further amendments be advised to the Executive Committee Members prior to sign off.

- **Unanimously Supported** the Vice-Chairman's proposal that the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer (CFO) should determine the final response, and that the Chief Fire Officer should draft a Consultation response letter for the Chairman, for subsequent sharing with the Executive Committee.

Chairman /
CFO

01.10.08 CONSULTATION RESPONSE: FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK 2008-11

The Executive Committee was invited to consider, comment and determine the Fire Authority's response to the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Consultation exercise on its proposals for the National Framework for the Fire and Rescue Service for 2008 to 2011.

The Chief Fire Officer took Members through the report presented and he drew their attention, particularly, to his response annotations to the proposed framework, as detailed in Section 3.5 of the report presented.

The Executive Committee:

- **Unanimously Agreed** to direct the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer to jointly determine and agree the Fire Authority's final response to the Communities and Local Government Department's consultation regarding its proposals for the National Framework for the Fire and Rescue Service for 2008 - 2011, based on the indicative comments detailed at Section 3.5 of the report presented.

Chairman /
CFO

01.11.08 2007/08 BUDGET MONITORING

The Executive Committee was advised of the revenue and capital expenditure against budgets, up to the end of December 2007. The Authority Treasurer reported that he expected that there would be a £200k underspend at year end, and that the Budget Sub Committee had recommended that this underspend be allocated to the equipment fund.

The Executive Committee:

- **Noted** the 2007/08 Budget Monitoring report.

01.12.08 TRANSFER OF NEW DIMENSION ASSETS

The Executive Committee was invited to consider the principles on the basis of which the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) propose to transfer the ownership of New Dimension assets to Fire and Rescue Authorities. The Committee was advised that, for the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, this would mean accepting ownership of a High Volume Pump and the Incident Response Unit.

The Chief Fire Officer noted his concern regarding the cost implications for the Fire Authority when, for example, the High Volume Pump would need to be replaced. The Chief Fire Officer agreed to bring this to the attention of the Regional Management Board at its next meeting.

CFO

The Executive Committee:

- **Noted** that the Department of Communities and Local Government had been advised that more information on maintenance and funding was required before the Fire Authority could be advised to accept the proposals in principle.

01.13.08 CREWING LEVEL MONITORING

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer tabled a copy of an updated report detailing the actual outrun figures for November 2007 and December 2007 for the shift crewing performance, incident crewing performance and causes of crewing at four riders (*copy available from the Committee Manager*). He reported that, since the introduction of the Optimisation of Crewing Policy, improvements to crewing levels had been qualified and the Wokingham fire station's appliance had been made available on more occasions by moving Stand-bys from other stations.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reminded the Executive Committee that, in recommending the revenue savings to the Fire Authority at its meeting on 13 February 2008, the Executive Committee would not have had the opportunity to review the January 2008 Optimisation of Crewing monitoring figures as part of the six month trial of the Policy. He reported that he was confident that these figures would still realise an improvement to the crewing levels, and, as such, the Optimisation of Crewing Policy would achieve the identified savings.

The Chairman agreed to Eduardo Cardoso's request to address the Executive Committee. Eduardo Cardoso noted that there were inconsistencies in the colours within the report's pie charts.

The Chief Fire Officer advised the Committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's initial concerns regarding the preceding granting of leave outside of Policy.

The Vice-Chairman conveyed his apologies and left the meeting.

01.14.08 SOUTH EAST FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE CONTROL CENTRE LTD (SEFRCCL)

Councillor Angus Ross advised the Committee that the SEFRCCL had met on 13 December 2007, and that the next meeting was expected to take place on 1 or 8 February 2008 when it was anticipated that the SEFRCCL Members would have the opportunity to visit the embryonic Regional Control Centre.

Councillor Angus Ross advised of the SEFRCCL's preference that another Fire Authority Member be appointed to act as a substitute for Councillor Angus Ross on occasions when he was unable to attend SEFRCCL Board meetings on behalf of the Fire Authority. The Chairman proposed Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson. **The Executive Committee Agreed** that the Fire Authority should be invited, at its meeting on 13 February 2008, to confirm the Fire Authority's Elected Member substitute appointment to attend, for the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, the SEFRCCL Board meetings in the absence of Councillor Angus Ross.

CMO

01.15.08 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.

01.16.07 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 19 November 2007 (*Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4*).
- Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) (*Paragraph 3*).
- Chief Fire Officer's Salary Review 2007 (*Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3*).

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

01.17.08 PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2007

The Executive Committee Approved the Part II Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 19 November 2007 for signing by the Chairman.

01.18.08 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (EAP)

The Executive Committee Unanimously Approved the Recommendation presented.

01.19.08 CHIEF FIRE OFFICER'S SALARY REVIEW 2007

The Executive Committee Unanimously Approved the Recommendation presented.