

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



Held on Monday 24 November 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 (Vice-Chairman, Fire Authority)  
Councillor Dr Paul Bryant (Chairman, Fire Authority) (*Chairman*)  
Councillor Colin Dudley (Member, Fire Authority)  
Councillor Fred Pugh (Member, Fire Authority)  
Councillor Angus Ross (Member, Fire Authority)

**In attendance:** Gene Ashe (Area Manager, Prevention and Protection)  
Olaf Baars (Deputy Chief Fire Officer)  
Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer)  
Becci Jefferies (Personnel Manager)  
Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)  
Caroline Redzikowska (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)  
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)  
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)  
David Wallace (Director of Human Resources)

**Observers:** Fire Brigades Union representatives  
UNISON representative

At the invitation of the Chairman, Eduardo Cardoso (Fire Brigades Union) confirmed that the Fire Brigades Union did not wish to address the Executive Committee on any items on the Agenda, and Christopher Glenn (UNISON) advised that he would like to address the Committee at Agenda Item 7 (2008/09 Budget Monitoring).

### 07.01.08 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

### 07.02.08 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Angus Ross declared a personal interest as the Fire Authority's representative and Board Member on the South East Fire and Rescue Service Control Centre Ltd (SEFRCCCL), in respect to Agenda Item 11 (South East Fire and Rescue Service Control Centre Ltd (SEFRCCCL)). No further Declarations of Interest were made.

### 07.03.08 PART I MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2008

The Part I Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2008 were received and **Agreed** as a correct record for signing by the Chairman, subject to following amendment:

- 06.02.08 (Declarations of Interest) - to now read "Councillor Angus Ross

### Action

declared a personal interest as the Fire Authority's representative and Board Member on the South East Fire and Rescue Service Control Centre Ltd (SEFRCCCL), in respect to Agenda Item 9 (FiReControl and FireLink update report) and Agenda Item 10 (South East Fire and Rescue Service Control Centre Ltd (SEFRCCCL). No further Declarations of Interest were made."

The Chairman noted that the Actions from the last meeting had been discharged, and the following updates were provided:

- 06.03.08 (Part I Minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2008) - the Chief Fire Officer reported that the Service was currently writing to the Unitary Planning Officers regarding the Sprinkler Strategy (03.06.08 / 04.03.08 / 05.06.08) and agreed to circulate a copy of the letter(s) to the Executive Committee. The Director of Human Resources advised that, as he did not yet have all the updated information relating to the discounts available to staff at leisure facilities, he would provide an update within the next HR Monitoring Report. CFO  
DHR
- 06.04.08 (Chairman's Communications) - the Clerk and Monitoring Officer confirmed that Members could submit travel claims when attending any meetings or events during the course of the Fire Authority's business, including instances when a meeting was not quorate.
- 06.05.08 (2008/09 Budget Monitoring and appointment of a Budget Sub Committee for 2009/10) - in response to Councillor Angus Ross, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised of the current position to date regarding the temporary facilities at Wokingham Fire Station, as presented in the Integrated Risk Management Plan Working Party Agenda of 20 November 2008. The Chief Fire Officer, in response to the Vice-Chairman, agreed to circulate a list of key Officer/Headquarters' contact numbers to Members. The Executive Committee and Officers **Accepted**, respectively, that both Members and Officers should make every effort to initiate contact in the event of not being able to attend a Fire Authority meeting or when a meeting could not go ahead when not quorate. The Chief Fire Officer advised that incoming telephone calls made out of office hours to the Headquarters' switchboard were automatically transferred through to Control, and that messages regarding Members' attendance at a meeting could be relayed by Control. CFO
- 06.06.08 (Revision of Relocation Allowances) - the Director of Human Resources confirmed that elements of the allowance package had been disaggregated so that different elements could be claimed separately rather than as a single claim and that this was now reflected with policy.

#### **07.04.08 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**

- The Chairman made reference to the Audit Commission's National Study on the Fire and Rescue Service, as considered at the recent Fire Forum. He stated that the Fire Forum had severely criticised the report in relying on statistics and not relating Fire Service performance to the specific circumstances of a Brigade.
- The Chairman reported that he had, with the Vice-Chairman and the Authority Treasurer, visited Westminster to lobby against the Local Government finance settlements for the next two years, and that a group of MPs, including

Mr Richard Benyon (MP for Newbury), would be taking this issue to the Minister to lobby on behalf of Fire Authorities. The Chief Fire Officer and the Authority Treasurer agreed to furnish Mr Benyon with any further briefings he required.

CFO /  
AT

- The Chairman reported that he looked forward to attending the Phoenix Passing Out Parade on 28 November 2008.

#### **07.05.08 REFURBISHMENT OF ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE TRAINING CENTRE AND CLASSROOMS**

The Executive Committee's approval was sought to commit efficiency savings from the 2008 Training budget to pay for refurbishment works at the Training Centre.

The Vice-Chairman was concerned at the number of Single Tender Actions that were being presented, and the Clerk and Monitoring Officer advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 18 November 2008, had expressed the same concerns. **The Executive Committee Supported** the need for the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service to take the necessary steps to avoid the need for Single Tender Actions.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer assured the Committee that there were a number of contractors which had previously carried out works for the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service which, he felt, could be approached with confidence to tender for the refurbishment works. The Chief Fire Officer was extremely confident that the required works would not exceed £36k.

Councillor Colin Dudley moved that the presented Recommendations be approved and that there be a further Recommendation that a minimum of three quotes be obtained which should include the assurance that the contract would be carried out to the specified required standards and within the specified timeframe, and that the total costs must not exceed £36k. Councillor Fred Pugh seconded this, and, on being put to the vote, was unanimously carried.

#### **The Executive Committee Agreed:**

- That the efficiency savings achieved by the Training Centre in 2008 be allocated to necessary refurbishment works at the Training Centre, and that Contract Standing Order 24 be applied on the grounds that there are demonstrable benefits (CSO24 (f)) and, therefore, Contract Standing Order 21 be waived.
- That a minimum of three quotes be obtained, to include the assurance that the contract would be carried out to the specified required standards and within the specified timeframe, and that the total costs must not exceed £36k.

#### **07.06.08 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY RECRUITMENT TARGETS**

The Executive Committee was advised of the Government's plans for introducing targets for the recruitment of BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) and female operational staff, and was invited to determine the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service targets that the Fire Authority wishes to propose to Communities and Local Government.

The Director of Human Resources introduced the presented report and referred to the methodology behind the considerations relating to the recruitment targets, the

local working population, the recruitment in the Asian community, the Retained Duty System, and to the Government's proposed stretch targets.

Councillor Angus Ross was not in support of stretch targets and felt that the Government's offer of a capital grant was an inducement. Councillor Colin Dudley was in support of stretch targets, however in response to his recruitment concerns, the Chief Fire Officer and the Director of Human Resources both gave their assurances that all Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service staff were selected solely on the basis on merit based on the requirements of the job. The Director of Human Resources stated that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service continued to encourage interest and applications from the under-represented groups.

The Chairman invited Eduardo Cardoso (Fire Brigades Union) to address the Committee. Eduardo Cardoso reported that the Fire Brigades Union had made a representation to the Communities and Local Government regarding this issue, and that the Fire Brigades Union was pleased that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service recruited only the best people for the respective roles.

Councillor Angus Ross moved that the proposed targets for the recruitment of BME and female operational staff, taking into account the unavailability of Asian firefighter recruits, be adopted on the basis of:

- Wholetime firefighter recruitment - 16.0%
- Retained firefighter recruitment - 10%
- Non-operational recruitment - 22.1%
- Overall - 18.5%

and this was seconded by Councillor Colin Dudley, and, on being put to the vote, was unanimously carried.

The Chairman moved that the Fire Authority, based on the receipt of the capital grant of at least £42k from the Government payable in two instalments in 2009 and 2010, commit to stretch targets of 18% for female operational recruits and 2% above the local working population for BME recruits, and on being put to the vote, was carried by four to one against.

The Chairman moved that Officers should present to the next meeting further proposals for how the Government's capital grant of £42k could be spent, and this was unanimously supported.

#### **The Executive Committee Agreed:**

- That the proposed targets for the recruitment of BME and female operational staff, taking into account the unavailability of Asian firefighter recruits, be adopted on the basis of Wholetime firefighter recruitment (16.0%), Retained firefighter recruitment (10%), non-operational recruitment (22.1%) and overall (18.5%).
- To commit to stretch targets of 18% for female operational recruits and 2% above the local working population for BME recruits, based on the receipt of the capital grant of at least £42k from the Government payable in two instalments in 2009 and 2010.

- That Officers should present, to the next meeting, further proposals for how the Government's capital grant of £42k could be spent.

#### **07.07.08 SINGLE TENDER ACTION - REMEDIAL WORKS REQUIRED RESULTING FROM THE 5-YEAR ELECTRICAL TESTING INSPECTIONS**

The Executive Committee's approval was sought to the waiver of Contract Standing Orders (CSOs) and the award of a contract to undertake remedial works to the electrical installations following the 5-year electrical testing inspections.

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer reported the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's concerns, as alluded to earlier in the meeting, regarding the number of Single Tender Actions being presented. She reported that, following a general discussion by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 18 November 2008 regarding procurement and contract processes, the Committee had invited Pat Arthur (Procurement and Facilities Manager) (PFM) to its next meeting to present an overview of the Single Tender Actions taken within the last 12 months, the reasons for these, and how they might have been precluded. She also reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had requested that, at its next meeting, they be provided with an outline of the procurement processes undertaken, how contracts were monitored, and why it appeared that there were increasing numbers of waivers to Standing Orders relating to the award of contracts being presented.

PFM

**The Executive Committee Noted** the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's concerns and actions taken and looked forward to a timely update.

Councillor Fred Pugh moved that the Recommendations be agreed, and this was seconded by the Vice-Chairman, and unanimously carried.

#### **The Executive Committee:**

- **Agreed** that Contract Standing Order 24 be applied on the grounds that there was genuine urgency (CSO24 (d)) and, therefore, that CSO 21 be waived.
- **Approved, retrospectively**, the award of the contract to R D Brett.

#### **07.08.08 THAMES VALLEY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES' SHARED FUNDING OF ARSON REDUCTION OFFICER**

The Executive Committee was advised of the work being undertaken by the Thames Valley Arson Reduction Officer and approval was sought for the continued funding of the post. Gene Ashe (Area Manager, Prevention and Protection) introduced the presented report, and advised that there was an error within Recommendation 2c) relating to the date period, and should in fact read "That the **2009-2010** contribution to this post be funded from within the Service Delivery salaries under spend in the current year."

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer reported the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's considerable concern that it was poor practice to seek funding for a post from any projected year-end underspend, and that such funding should have been sought from the 2009/2010 budget round. She also reported that the Committee had urged the Executive Committee to seek clarification as to the exact period, ie from and to,

as referred to within the last sentence of the first paragraph under Section 4 of the report ("*Sub-region Fire and Rescue Services have committed to support the post for a further 2 years, at which time an evaluation of permanence will be made*").

In response to Councillor Colin Dudley, Gene Ashe assured him that the Fire Authority's annual contribution of £12k offered extremely good value for money.

The Chairman moved an amendment to Recommendation 2c) to now read "That the 2008-2009 contribution to this post be allocated to the 2009/10 budget, with subsequent years also being allocated to the budget." This was unanimously supported.

**The Executive Committee Agreed:**

- To continue to support the collaborative provision of a Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services Arson Reduction Officer.
- That the Fire Authority's contribution to this post be made a recurring item within the Community Safety Cost Centre.
- That the 2008-2009 contribution to this post be allocated to the 2009/10 budget, with subsequent years also being allocated to the budget.

**07.09.08 2008/09 BUDGET MONITORING**

The Executive Committee was advised of the revenue and capital expenditure against budgets up to the end of October 2008.

The Authority Treasurer referred to the projected year-end underspend, as detailed in the presented report, and, in noting his concerns regarding the slippage of the capital programme, reiterated the importance of improved capital expenditure planning to avoid any carry forward to the next financial year and to ensure that budgetary revenue implications were kept to a minimum. In response to Councillor Angus Ross, the Authority Treasurer confirmed that the 2009/10 Budget Working Party would be considering the Reserves.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Christopher Glenn declined to now address the Executive Committee. In response to the Chairman's invitation to the Fire Brigades Union representatives present to address the Committee, Eduardo Cardoso reported that the Fire Brigades Union felt that the underspend relating to the uniformed staff costs was partly due to some firefighters experiencing a loss in earnings. The Chief Fire Officer assured the Committee that there had not been any reduction in the number of uniformed personnel, but he did accept that savings had been realised through a reduction in the number of calls and through the introduction of the Optimisation of Crewing Policy.

**The Executive Committee Noted** the 2008/09 Budget Monitoring report.

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

The Executive Committee was advised of staff retention, medical retirements,

workplace accidents and sickness absences, and Equality and Diversity statistics during the period April 2008 to September 2008 at Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, and Becci Jefferies (Personnel Manager) took the Committee through the presented report.

Councillor Angus Ross referred to his continued concern regarding the current turnover of Control staff.

**The Executive Committee Noted** the Human Resources Monitoring report.

#### **07.11.08 SOUTH EAST FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE CONTROL CENTRE LTD (SEFRCCCL) UPDATE REPORT**

Councillor Angus Ross provided an update, in his capacity as the Fire Authority's representative and Board Member on the South East Fire and Rescue Service Control Centre Ltd (SEFRCCCL), the salient points being:

- That it was expected that the Government would announce shortly that there would be a delay to the FiReControl and Firelink projects.
- That his recent visit to the London Regional Control Centre had been extremely beneficial.
- That, with regret, the announcement of the recent death of the Surrey Fire Authority's representative on the SEFRCCCL.

**The Executive Committee Noted** the SEFRCCCL update report.

#### **07.12.08 INSURANCE - CONSORTIUM AND FRAML UPDATE**

The Executive Committee was advised of the latest developments with the Mutual Insurance Company, including the results of the Insurance Consortium tender exercise. The Authority Treasurer advised that the Appeals by Brent LBC were not likely to be heard now until Easter 2009.

**The Executive Committee Noted** the Insurance - Consortium and FRAML update report, and **Supported** the continuance of FRAML.

#### **07.13.08 REPORT OF DISCIPLINARY APPEALS AND GRIEVANCE (DAG) COMMITTEE**

The Executive Committee was advised of the decision of the Disciplinary Appeals and Grievance (DAG) Committee in relation to the Pension Appeal heard on 24 October 2008 and in accordance with Standing Order CO 18, to seek approval for an ex gratia payment.

**The Executive Committee:**

- **Noted** the findings of the DAG Committee.
- **Agreed** the recommendation of the DAG Committee that an ex gratia payment of £1,500 be made to the Appellant.

**DHR**

## **07.14.08 MINUTES OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE'S MEETING HELD ON 11 JUNE 2008**

**The Executive Committee Noted** the Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on Wednesday 11 June 2008, and **Agreed** that, where practicable, the Committee be provided, in advance of its meetings, a copy of the draft Minutes from the preceding meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in order that the Committee can be advised of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's considerations relating to the Executive Committee Agenda.

**Committee  
Manager**

## **07.15.08 DATE OF NEXT MEETING / 2009 MEETINGS**

**The Executive Committee Noted** that the next meeting would take place on Monday 26 January 2009 at 6.30pm in the Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, and that the subsequent 2009 meetings would take place on:

- Monday 23 March 2009
- Monday 18 May 2009
- Monday 27 July 2009
- Monday 28 September 2009
- Monday 23 November 2009

All the above meetings will take place at 6.30pm in the Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

## **07.16.08 FORWARD PLAN**

In **Noting** the Forward Plan, the Executive Committee **Supported** the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendation that the letting of contracts should be included within the Forward Plan and that the Committee might wish to consider any future major contracts prior to the commencement of the tendering process.

**Committee  
Manager**

At the invitation of the Chairman, Eduardo Cardoso (Fire Brigades Union) addressed the Committee and requested that Officers should consider the Assessment against Partnership for Common Sense when preparing reports.

## **07.17.08 EXCLUSION OF THE 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 22 September 2008 (Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4).
- Award of 5-Year cleaning Services Contract 2009-2014 (Paragraphs 1 and 3).

**07.18.08 PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON  
22 SEPTEMBER 2008**

The Executive Committee Approved the Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2008 for signing by the Chairman.

**07.19.08 AWARD OF 5-YEAR CLEANING SERVICES CONTRACT  
2009-2014**

The Executive Committee Agreed to defer the award of the 5-year Cleaning Services contract to an Extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee on 17 December 2008 at 10am.