

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



Held on Monday 26 January 2009

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

Those present: Councillor Jeff Brooks (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Dr Paul Bryant (Chairman, Fire Authority) (*Chairman*)
Councillor Colin Dudley (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Jagjit Grewal (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Fred Pugh (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Angus Ross (Member, Fire Authority)

In attendance: Olaf Baars (Deputy Chief Fire Officer)
Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer)
George Cross (Area Manager, Support Services)
Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
Andy Mancey (Area Manager, Response)
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 wished to address the Executive Committee at Agenda Item 6 (2009/10 Budget). Christopher Glenn (Unison) advised that he did not wish to address the Committee.

01.01.09 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson (Vice-Chairman, Fire Authority).

01.02.09 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 10 (South East Fire and Rescue Service Control Centre Ltd (SEFRCCCL). No further Declarations of Interest were made.

01.03.09 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2008

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2008 were received and **Agreed** as a correct record for signing by the Chairman.

Action

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

- The Chief Fire Officer reported that he had not yet circulated to the Executive Committee a copy of the letter(s) that he had sent to the Unitary Planning Officers regarding the Sprinkler Strategy (03.06.08 / 04.03.08 / 05.06.08 / 06.03.08 / 07.03.08).
- The Chief Fire Officer advised that a revised Members' card, which would include the Strategic Commitments and key contact numbers, would be circulated to Members shortly (07.03.08).
- The Chief Fire Officer reported that the issue of Local Government finance settlements was still ongoing (07.04.08).

CFO

Committee
Manager

01.04.09 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 DECEMBER 2008

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2008 were received and **Agreed** as a correct record for signing by the Chairman.

01.05.09 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

- The Chairman reported that he had attended a meeting of the Regional Management Board on 21 January 2009, and had circulated to Members his briefing report.
- The Chairman reported that he had attended the launch of the Incident Command Unit (ICU) in Windsor on 23 January 2009, and he conveyed his congratulations to the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service for their work in realising a world class ICU. He also acknowledged the excellent partnership working that had taken place. The Chief Fire Officer commended the Deputy Chief Fire Officer for driving this forward.
- The Chairman advised that he had attended a Phoenix Passing Out Parade on 28 November 2009.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented some Police thermal image footage of a successful water rescue carried out by the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's Water Rescue Team in response to an incident on the River Thames on 19 December 2008. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that the Water Rescue Team had also carried out a successful resuscitation which demonstrated the improved first aid skills being acquired by firefighters. The Chief Fire Officer conveyed his thanks to the Fire Authority for supporting investment in water safety which had realised new equipment, training and improved capabilities, and which was also ensuring that water rescues were carried out safely. The Executive Committee congratulated the Water Rescue Team involved in the aforementioned rescue and acknowledged the excellent work of the Team.

Councillor Angus Ross advised that he, together with Councillor Fred Pugh, had recently spent time at Station 1 (Caversham Road) where they had been able to witness the work of Water Rescue Team and the Water Rescue Boat. He suggested that a future presentation to the Fire Authority on the work of the Water

Rescue Team and the equipment they currently use would be beneficial, as would a feature on the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's website.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Jesse James (Station Manager, Station 1) conveyed his thanks to Councillor Angus Ross and Councillor Fred Pugh, and he extended an invitation to all Members of the Fire Authority to visit Station 1 to enable them to be shown the work of, and the equipment used by, the Water Rescue Team.

Members

01.06.09 2009/10 BUDGET

The Executive Committee was advised of the work of the Budget Sub Committee, including the bids supported by the Budget Sub Committee. The Executive Committee considered the 3-year budget scenarios for precept increases of 4.1%, 4.5% and 4.9%, with Band D council taxes of £54.69, £54.90 and £55.11 respectively, the presented Revenue and Capital bids, and the Revenue savings.

The Authority Treasurer provided an updated budget scenario at 26 January 2009 (*update to Appendix A*) and he took Members through the budget scenario presented, noting that he had now received figures from all of the Unitary Authorities which realised a Collection Fund surplus of £28k, assuming a 328700 Council Tax Base. He also took Members through the 3-year budget scenarios, the Revenue and Capital bids and Revenue savings, as presented.

The Chief Fire Officer, in recognising that the Fire Authority was a "floor" Authority, urged Members to consider the maximum precept increase, and this was supported by the Fire Brigades Union.

The Authority Treasurer confirmed that he had not received any comments from the Unitary Authorities' Treasurers with regard to the presented Council Tax increases.

The Executive Committee considered further options to realise additional required savings to support the 2009/10 budget, the salient points being:

- In response to the Councillor Jeff Brooks, the Chief Fire Officer advised that Officers had considered further potential savings to realise a 4.1% Council Tax increase, but that no significant additional savings had been identified, however further savings might be realised through the use of the Government's grant for training for the Incident Response Unit (IRU) and through recruitment costs if the anticipated firefighter transfers were successful.
- The Assistant Chief Fire Officer reported that £26k further savings had now been identified as at 26 January 2009 relating to BT telephone charges.
- In response to Members, the Clerk and Monitoring Officer provided indicative and comparative Member Allowances' data, as paid by other Fire Authorities.
- The Fire Brigades Union invited the Fire Authority to consider conducting a review of the non-uniformed personnel, and it noted its concerns for next year's budget.

The Executive Committee then considered the presented Capital bids, the salient points being:

- The Authority Treasurer agreed to provide Members with the maintenance spend for the last three years for premises.
- The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that the Capital bid for the Chemical Incident Unit (CIU) could be reduced from £240k to £40k following an Integrated Risk Management Plan Challenge process, the outcome of which had proposed a trial period where the equipment from the CIU be palletised and stowed on the Operational Support Unit (OSU).
- The Executive Committee acknowledged that savings might be further realised within the Premises Works Capital programme as there might be room for negotiation, particularly within the current financial climate.

AT

The Executive Committee:

- **Noted** the budgets considered by the Budget Sub Committee.
- **Supported** the Revenue bids, subject to a recommendation that the presented Members Allowances' Revenue bid of £50k be reduced to £20k, and that this should also include Member training and development. Councillor Jeff Brooks did not wish to recommend a specific reduction until he had consulted with his Party Group.
- **Supported** the presented Capital bids, subject to the removal of £200k for the Chemical Incident Unit bid for 2009/10, and the transfer of £260k from 2009/10 to 2010/11 for the extension to Wokingham Fire Station.
- **Recommended** the presented Revenue Savings.
- **Recommended** a budget to the full Fire Authority, based on a precept increase of 4.9%, which was carried by three votes for a 4.9% increase, with one vote for a 4.5% increase and two abstentions. Both Councillor Jeff Brooks and Councillor Angus Ross reserved their position. Councillor Jeff Brooks, as the Liberal Democrat Party Group Leader, wished to consult with his Party Group, and Councillor Angus Ross could not support any increases to non-operational staffing levels within the current financial climate. The Chairman and Councillor Jagjit Grewal, as the Conservative and Labour Party Group Leaders respectively, stated that they would also be seeking the views of their respective Party Group Members.

01.07.09 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

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

The Authority Treasurer anticipated a £500k underspend at year-end.

In response to the Chairman who did not believe it best practice, the Authority Treasurer agreed not to include, within future reports, how any underspend might be used.

AT

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

01.08.09 RETAINED AVAILABILITY AND THE IMPACT ON THE VIABILITY OF PROVIDING A RETAINED SERVICE

The Executive Committee was advised of the current and foreseeable challenges facing the Authority in providing a Retained Service, including the significant challenges facing the Authority in maintaining an effective Retained Service within Berkshire.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer gave a presentation entitled 'Retained availability and the impact on the viability of providing a Retained Service' (*copy available from the Committee Manager*) in which he outlined the current Retained Stations/Units, and the Retained costs, availability and activities. He provided a summary of the Retained issues, including modernisation costs, recruitment standards, development of competence for role, EC (European Commission) Working Time Directive, EC Road Transport Directive, social demographics, economic pressures and lower earning potential which were realising significant periods of unavailability, and extended turnout times. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer stated that there was now a need to re-model the risk model based on actual performance. He referred to the recruitment of the Retained Recruitment and Retention Co-ordinator which was now on hold pending further work, and to the strategic work required and the Integrated Risk Management Plan review.

Councillor Jeff Brooks felt that there was a need to consider, nationally, the successes achieved by Retained Recruitment and Retention Co-ordinators in other Fire and Rescue Services.

Councillor Colin Dudley, in accepting the Retained Service issues as presented, reiterated his concern that the budget allocated in 2008/09 for the Retained Recruitment and Retention Co-ordinator had not been utilised. The Chief Fire Officer, in noting that this post had in fact been offered to an individual who subsequently withdrew their acceptance, stated that evidence identified within the last six months was now leading to the Service to review how to maintain an effective Retained Service within Berkshire. Councillor Colin Dudley noted his concern that, in order for Retained firefighters to receive the full Retained availability payment (Retaining fee), Retained firefighters must provide in excess of 120 hours of availability per week, which he felt was a huge commitment. Councillor Colin Dudley believed that the Retained turnout performances, as presented, were still a good achievement.

The Executive Committee Noted the report.

01.09.09 RESILIENCE OPTIONS BEING CONSIDERED FOR THE CURRENT CONTROL

The Executive Committee was advised of the current and foreseeable challenges in maintaining an effective local Control Room function until the mobilising and resource management function moves into the Regional Control Centre.

The Executive Committee Noted the report.

01.10.09 SOUTH EAST FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE CONTROL CENTRE LTD (SEFRCCCL)

The Executive Committee was advised by Councillor Angus Ross, in his capacity as the Fire Authority's representative and Board Member on the South East Fire and Rescue Service Control Centre Ltd (SEFRCCCL), of the outcomes of the SEFRCCCL's Board meeting held on 9 January 2009.

The Executive Committee Noted the report.

01.11.09 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY RECRUITMENT TARGETS - OPTIONS FOR SPENDING ANTICIPATED CAPITAL GRANT

The Executive Committee was advised of options for spending the capital grant of a minimum of £42k that it was anticipated the Fire Authority would receive as a result of adopting 'stretch' equality and diversity recruitment targets.

Councillor Colin Dudley referred to the Option (provision of welfare units for female firefighters) considered by the Fire Brigades Union at the Fire Liaison Group's meeting on 26 January 2009 (*copy of Minutes available from the Committee Manager*) which he felt should be included within the Options for further consideration.

The Executive Committee was advised of the considerations by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 20 January 2009 (*copy of Minutes available from the Committee Manager*).

The Executive Committee:

- **Noted** the report.
- **Agreed** that, once the Communities and Local Government (CLG) had confirmed whether the Fire Authority would be in receipt of the additional capital funding or whether the grant would be greater than the guaranteed £42k, the Options for spending the capital grant should be considered by the Community Engagement and Equality Group (CEEG) for subsequent recommendation to the Executive Committee.

DHR

CEEG

01.12.09 INSURANCE - CONSORTIUM AND FRAML

The Authority Treasurer advised that the Mutual Insurance Company Board had met in December 2008 to consider the future of FRAML, and that the Directors had agreed to continue with FRAML, and that this was expected to be ratified at the Annual General meeting in February 2009.

The Executive Committee Noted the Insurance - Consortium and FRAML update.

01.13.09 CREWING LEVEL MONITORING

The Executive Committee was advised of crewing levels for Wholetime appliances, including the Wholetime crewing levels based on full shifts for the third

quarter of the 2008/9 financial year (from 1 October to 31 December 2008). The Deputy Chief Fire Officer noted that the Optimisation of Crewing policy continued to realise improvements to the crewing levels.

The Executive Committee Noted the Crewing Level Monitoring report.

01.14.09 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION UPDATE

The Executive Committee was provided with an update on the responses made under Freedom of Information, and was advised of the disclosure log, which is also available to the public on the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's website under the Publication Scheme. Following a brief overview of the website's disclosure log, **the Executive Committee:**

- **Agreed** that Freedom of Information updates need not be provided to each meeting of the Executive Committee, but that, annually, a report be presented outlining the total number of responses made under Freedom of Information, and that Officers be provided with the discretion to report to the Committee any anomalies or undue requests should they arise.
- **Agreed** that the Assistant Chief Fire Officer should provide all Fire Authority Members with the link to the Freedom of Information disclosure log on the website.
- **Noted** the Freedom of Information update.

Standing
Annual Item
(January)

ACFO

ACFO

01.15.09 MINUTES OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE'S MEETING HELD ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2008 (NOT YET APPROVED)

The Executive Committee Noted the Minutes (not yet approved) of the Audit Committee meeting held on 29 September 2008.

01.16.09 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Executive Committee Noted that the next meeting would take place on Monday 23 March 2009 at 6.30pm in the Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

At the conclusion of the meeting, **the Executive Committee Agreed** to hold a further meeting of the Committee on Wednesday 11 February 2009 at 4pm (*venue to be advised*) to consider the future structure of the Fire Authority.

01.17.09 FORWARD PLAN

The Executive Committee Noted the Forward Plan.

01.18.09 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 24 November 2008 (Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4).
- Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2008 (Paragraphs 1 and 3).
- Award of 5-Year Cleaning Services Contract 2009-2014 (Paragraphs 1 and 3).

**01.19.09 PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
24 NOVEMBER 2008**

The Executive Committee Approved the Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2008 for signing by the Chairman.

**01.20.09 PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
17 DECEMBER 2008**

The Executive Committee Approved the Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2008 for signing by the Chairman, **subject to a minor amendment.**

01.21.09 AWARD OF 5-YEAR CLEANING SERVICES CONTRACT 2009-2014

The Executive Committee, following receipt of further information, **Agreed** to award the contract for the provision of a 5-Year Cleaning Services Contract to commence 1 April 2009 to the preferred provider.