

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



Held on Monday 17 September 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)
Councillor Dr Paul Bryant (Member, Fire Authority) (*Chairman*)
Councillor Angus Ross (Member, Fire Authority)

In attendance: Olaf Baars (Deputy Chief Fire Officer)
Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer)
Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
Russell Reeve (Audit Manager, Audit Commission) (*Item 05.10.07*)
Richard Taylor (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
Des Tidbury (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)
Mick West (District Auditor, Audit Commission) (*Item 05.10.07*)

Action

05.01.07 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jeff Brooks (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Tom Crisp (Member, Fire Authority) and Councillor Colin Dudley (Member, Fire Authority).

05.02.07 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.

05.03.07 Part I Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2007

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the application and reporting of Performance Indicators (04.14.07) at its meeting on 11 September 2007.

The Chairman confirmed that the revised Fire Authority Compensation Policy (04.07.07) had been considered by himself and Councillor Tom Crisp, as Party Group Leaders, and that a conclusion had been reached which would be reported at a future date.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that he had considered the introduction of a Forward Plan with the Clerk and Monitoring Officer and the Committee Manager. The Chairman noted the Chief Fire Officer's expectation that this would now be brought to the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

Agenda
19.11.07

The Part I Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 9 July 2007 were **Agreed** as a correct record for signing by the Chairman.

05.04.07 Chairman's Communications

The Chairman reported that he had attended the recently held Royal County of Berkshire Show at which the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service had conducted 4 extrication exercises and chip pan demonstrations.

The Chairman agreed to the Chief Fire Officer's request that Item 10 (External Audit - 2006/07 Annual Governance Report) be considered next.

05.10.07 External Audit - 2006/07 Annual Governance Report

The Executive Committee was advised of the receipt of the Audit Commission's Governance Report in respect of the 2006/07 Audit.

Mick West and Russell Reeve introduced the Governance Report presented and referred specifically to the conclusions, and the identified internal controls that needed to be addressed over the coming year, as reflected within the Action Plan.

The Authority Treasurer confirmed that the inaugural meeting of the Audit Committee had been arranged for Thursday 11 October 2007.

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that individual password protected log-ins to replace the current Watch Group password protected log-ins were being rolled-out.

The Chairman and the Chief Fire Officer, on behalf of the Fire Authority and the Officers of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service respectively, conveyed their thanks to Russell Reeve and Mick West for their help and support.

The Executive Committee:

- **Supported** the Chairman's recommendation that the Audit Committee should consider the progress on the introduction of a method of countersigning Watch Managers' overtime and enhancement claims.
- **Supported** the Chairman's recommendation that the Minutes of the Audit Committee be presented to the Executive Committee as a Standing Agenda Item.
- **Noted** the positive comments made in the report.
- **Noted** that an unqualified audit opinion is expected to be issued on the annual accounts for 2006/07.

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Standing
Agenda
Item

The Chairman agreed to the Chief Fire Officer's request that Agenda Item 9 (Review of the provision of Station Cooks) and, subsequently, Agenda Item 11 (Optimisation of Crewing) be considered next.

05.09.07 Review of the provision of Station Cooks

The Executive Committee was invited to consider the report of a review into the provision and use of station cooks on wholetime fire stations, which had been commissioned by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 15 January 2007, and to direct the Budget Sub Committee to consider whether the benefits of providing cooks outweighed their costs.

The **Executive Committee Noted** that the considerations given to the remit of Budget Sub Committee were subject to the Executive Committee's subsequent agreement to the appointment of a 2008/2009 Budget Sub Committee and respective Terms of Reference, to be considered at item 05.07.07.

The Executive Committee considered that the welfare issues in respect to the provision of cooks and the financial implications of this provision should be considered in isolation.

The Chief Fire Officer, in response to a question from the Chairman, stated that the responsibilities of the cooks could be extended but that there were considerable problems in doing so.

The Chairman invited the Representative Bodies present to address the Executive Committee. Christopher Glenn (UNISON) and Eduardo Cardoso (Fire Brigades Union) both welcomed the review and both sought to address the Budget Sub Committee during the future considerations of this issue. Christopher Glenn believed that there was merit in exploring an extension to the cooks' responsibilities.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer agreed to a request from Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson for comparable data relating to the provision of station cooks on wholetime fire stations in the Fire and Rescue Authorities within the South East region.

DCFO

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer assured Members that the Budget Sub Committee would be afforded the background reports pertaining to the Review of the provision of Station Cooks.

The Executive Committee:

- **Gave its assurance** that it would consider both the value of the cooks to the service as well as the associated budgetary implications.
- **Directed** the Budget Sub Committee to consider whether the benefits of providing cooks outweighs their costs, and that the supporting report to the Budget Sub Committee should include the views of the Representative Bodies and staff, and a copy of the questionnaire conducted to support the survey of the provision of station cooks on wholetime stations.
- **Noted** that the Representative Bodies would wish to make comment to the Budget Sub Committee.

05.11.07 Optimisation of Crewing

The Executive Committee received a presentation from the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, entitled 'Optimisation of Crewing Policy - Crewing Statistics for August 2005 - 2007', (*copy available from the Committee Manager*). The Deputy Chief Fire Officer demonstrated how the Policy had been implemented during August 2007, and was pleased to report that the Policy was proving effective. He provided a detailed breakdown of statistical data relating to switch crewing, detachments, pumping appliances crewing at four and the reasons for crewing at four, and agreed to circulate this data to the Executive Committee. He noted that the management of leave had been the fundamental reason for many of the crewing levels being at four during August 2007, and believed that if this had been managed more effectively, there would have been a significant improvement to the crewing levels during this period. He noted, however, that this was being addressed.

DCFO

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the revised Optimisation of Crewing Policy, as adopted by the Executive Committee in May 2007, had not been changed, however the minor terminology amendments made since its adoption were purely to clarify some of the issues to enable better interpretation.

The Chairman invited the Representative Bodies present to address the Executive Committee.

- Eduardo Cardoso (Fire Brigades Union) did not believe that the Optimisation of Crewing Policy was proving effective, and he doubted the crewing level data presented, stating that the improvements seen in crewing levels appeared to be greater in 2005/2006 than 2006/2007. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer agreed to Eduardo Cardoso's request to furnish him with a copy of the aforementioned detailed data. Eduardo Cardoso also believed that the terminology amendments made to the Policy, as previously alluded to, had in fact changed the connotation of the Policy.
- Eduardo Cardoso believed that it was not safe to crew appliances with four operational personnel. The Chief Fire Officer agreed that it was more desirable to crew at five, but four was a safe level.
- Lincoln Ball (Fire Brigades Union) had some concerns relating to the setting up of the five zones in which crewing levels were managed, which the Fire Brigades Union saw as rather artificial boundaries. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer gave his assurance that the boundaries could be re-visited if it was deemed necessary once the evidence had been amassed over the 6-month trial.

DCFO

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the issues raised by the Fire Brigades Union would be considered by the Management prior to the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

CFO /
DCFO

The Chief Fire Officer noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had, at its meeting on 11 September 2007, agreed to consider crewing levels at its next meeting in November 2007.

The Executive Committee:

- **Agreed** that the 3-monthly pilot crewing levels data be presented to the next meeting, to enable the data to be considered in advance of the final 6-month pilot review. Agenda
19.11.07
- **Agreed** that the revised Optimisation of Crewing Policy, detailing the terminology amendments made, be presented to the next meeting to enable the Executive Committee to clarify that the amendments had not changed the Policy in any way. Agenda
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05.05.07 Revision of Property and Resources Committee's Remit

The Executive Committee was advised of the need to change the remit of the Property and Resources Committee to allow it to consider a forthcoming report with recommendations for a property strategy for the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority.

The Executive Committee considered the issues referred to in the report presented.

The Executive Committee:

- **Acknowledged** that the Members of the Property and Resources Committee would need to be mindful of their respective Declarations of Interest, and that, with the wider remit of this Committee, the appointed Members were still happy to remain on the Committee. Chairman
- **Recommended** to the Fire Authority the proposed revisions, including the revised Property and Resources Committee's Terms of Reference.

05.06.07 Proposed opening of Bank of Ireland Corporate Deposit Account and Revised Investment Strategy

The Executive Committee's approval was sought to the opening of a Corporate Deposit Account with the Bank of Ireland in order to spread the Authority's investment risk, and to amend the Authority's Investment Strategy.

The Executive Committee:

- **Resolved** that the Bank of Ireland be appointed as one of the Authority's bankers for the purposes of operating a Corporate Deposit Account.
- **Resolved** that the Authority Treasurer be authorised to sign all appropriate documentation in relation to services and facilities to be provided by the Bank.
- **Resolved** that the mandate for the operation of bank accounts, payment instructions and banking services be provided to the Bank and that amendments to the mandate may be made only by the Authority Treasurer.
- **Resolved** that the Authority's Investment Strategy be amended to allow investment in the Fire Authorities Mutual Limited.

05.07.07 2007/08 Budget Monitoring and appointment of a Budget Sub Committee

The Executive Committee was advised of the revenue and capital expenditure against budgets up to the end of August 2007, and was invited to appoint a Budget Sub Committee. He noted the need for Fire Authorities to prepare a 3-year financial plan and indicative Council Tax levels.

The Executive Committee:

- **Noted** the budget monitoring report.
- **Agreed** to the appointment of a 2008/2009 Budget Sub Committee.
- **Agreed** to the Budget Sub Committee's Terms of Reference, subject to the membership being revised to four Members (two Conservative Members, one Labour Member and one Liberal Democrat Member).
- **Agreed** that the Members appointed to the Budget Sub Committee would be the Chairman, Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson, Councillor Tom Crisp and the Vice-Chairman (Councillor Jeff Brooks), on the proviso that the Vice-Chairman be allowed to appoint another Member from the Liberal Democrat Group to replace him if he wished. The Chairman agreed to consult with the Vice-Chairman.

Chairman

05.08.07 Outcome of Negotiations on the introduction of Additional Responsibility Allowances

The Executive Committee was informed of the outcome of negotiations with the Fire Brigades Union at Stage 3 of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's Negotiating Procedure regarding the introduction of Additional Responsibility Allowances, and was invited to approve the Additional Responsibility Allowances Policy and specific proposal for payment of Additional Responsibility Allowances in 2007/08.

The Director of Human Resources confirmed that the Policy would be monitored by the Senior Management Team and that the Senior Management Team would, on an annual basis and as required between, determine what additional skills and responsibilities would be required for the forthcoming year.

The Executive Committee:

- **Noted** the outcome of Stage 3 Negotiations on the introduction of Additional Responsibility Allowances.
- **Approved** the Additional Responsibility Allowances Policy and specific proposals for payment of Additional Responsibility Allowances in 2007/08.

The Chairman conveyed his thanks to all those personnel, including the Fire Brigades Union, who had been involved in the negotiations.

05.12.07 Date of next meeting

The Executive Committee Noted that the next meeting would take place on Monday 19 November 2007 at 6.30pm in the Strategic Command Centre,

Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

05.13.07 Dates of subsequent meetings of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee Noted that the subsequent meetings would be held at 6.30pm in the Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters on:

- Monday 21 January 2008
- Monday 17 March 2008
- Monday 19 May 2008
- Monday 21 July 2008
- Monday 22 September 2008
- Monday 24 November 2008

05.14.07 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:

- Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programme (*Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3*)
- Insurance Tenders (*Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3*)
- Employment Tribunals Applications update (*Paragraphs 1 and 2*)
- Service and Maintenance Agreement for Brigade's breathing apparatus sets (*Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3*)
- Briefings:
 - a) Establishment of Arms Length Trading Company for Training Activities (*Paragraph 3*)
 - b) Management of redundancies arising from the introduction of the South East Regional Control Centre (*Paragraphs 1, 2 and 4*)

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

05.15.07 Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programme

The Executive Committee Approved the recommendation presented, and **Endorsed** the Action Plan presented.

05.16.07 Insurance Tenders

The Executive Committee Approved the recommendation presented.

05.17.07 Employment Tribunals Applications update

The Executive Committee Noted the update provided by the Director of Human Resources.

05.18.07 Service and Maintenance Agreement for Brigade's breathing apparatus sets

The Executive Committee Approved the recommendation presented.

05.19.07 Briefings

a) Establishment of Arms Length Trading Company for Training Activities

The Chief Fire Officer advised of a report that would be presented to the Fire Authority at its meeting on 10 October 2007.

b) Management of redundancies arising from the introduction of the South East Regional Control Centre

The Executive Committee was advised of the position relating to the management of redundancies arising from the introduction of the South East Regional Control Centre.