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AGENDA ITEM 3: MINUTES

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD AT BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS ON MONDAY 24 JANUARY 2005 COMMENCING AT 6.30PM AND CONCLUDED AT 7.50PM

Present: Terry Mills (Chairman), Christine Borgars, James Mole, Barrie Patman

Apologies: Jeff Brooks (Vice-Chairman), Mike Adams

2.01/05 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Having been reminded that in accordance with the Fire Authority's Code of Conduct, Members are required to declare interests, which are Personal or Personal and Prejudicial, where appropriate, it was noted that on this occasion there were no such declarations to be made.

2.02/05 ADDITIONAL PART I AND PART II AGENDA ITEMS

The Chairman advised that he is permitting the inclusion of the following additional Part I and Part II reports on the Agenda on the grounds that due to special circumstances they should be considered as a matter of urgency in accordance with Section 100B – Subsection (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972:

Part I – Agenda item 10A: Single Tender Action – Service and Maintenance Agreements for Brigade's Breathing Apparatus

Part II - Agenda item 15A: Proposed Redundancy – CAD Technician

2.03/05 PART I MINUTES: 10 JANUARY 2005

The Part I Minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 10 January 2005, having been previously circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2.04/05 BUDGET 2005/2006 UPDATE

The Committee received a copy (Agenda item 4 – not reproduced) of the latest Budget figures and were requested to give further consideration to the Authority's Budget requirements for 2005/2006 and recommend the final approved Budget to the Fire Authority for final consideration and approval at its meeting on Wednesday 9 February 2005.

Members were advised that the report prepared by the Authority Treasurer is supported by the following Appendices:

Appendix A:	Provisional FSS and Grant for 2005/2006
Appendix B:	Budget Indications 2005/2006 to 2007/2008
Appendix C:	Revenue Bids
Appendix D:	Revenue Savings
Appendix E:	Capital Bids

With the approval of the Chairman the Authority Treasurer (AT) having tabled revised copies of Appendices A to D (not reproduced) took Members through the report and the following is a summary of the comments made:

The total Capital expenditure identified in Appendix E is now £1,495,765 and is funded through Supported and Unsupported Borrowing of £726,000 and £769,765 respectively. The Revenue Budget for Recruit Training has also been increased to £80,100 as shown in Appendix C.

The necessary financial information has also been received from the six Unitary Authorities, which show Council Tax collection fund deficits of £44,000. This together with the final Council Taxbase figures, gives the Authority a further financial implication of £51,000, creating a shortfall of £95,000 which is made up as follows and shown in Appendix B:

Uniformed Pensions Deficit (decrease)	£20,000
Reduce Regional Collaboration/Control Costs	£20,000
Reduce Highly Desirable Bids	£35,000
Increase Revenue Savings	£20,000

In addition the Community Safety Budget as identified in Appendix C will now be implemented from 1 October instead of 1 April 2005 which provides the opportunity to reduce the initial Budget by 50%.

In 2004/2005 the Authority's Band D Council Tax was £43.97 and the proposed 2005/2006 Budget would provide a 4.98% annual increase to £46.16 or in cash terms an increase of £2.19 per Band D property.

In providing the Committee with an overview of the Budget the Chief Fire Officer drew Members attention to Note 8 of Appendix B regarding the budget for the Regional Collaboration/Control Costs and emphasised that the funding would only be spent by this Authority and would not be transferred to another Authority or central fund nor would it be used to fund any Regional Control Rooms.

RESOLVED: That the Fire Authority's budgetary requirements for 2005/2006 as set out in the Appendices be endorsed and referred to the Fire Authority at its meeting on Wednesday 9 February 2005 with a recommendation that it be approved.

The Committee received a report (Agenda item 5 – not reproduced) seeking their direction on the short-term future for Royal Berkshire Officers formal ‘undress’ uniform following the roll out of the new style uniform for both station based personnel and Officers.

Members were advised that a decision was made to roll out the new style uniform as a short-term measure for the reason set out in paragraph 2 of the report (not reproduced). Now that Station based personnel have been issued with the new style clothing, the next phase involves the roll out to Officers.

Presently all Officers have a set of formal wear which costs an estimated £350 and it is predicted that the Brigade are likely to order a further twelve sets within the next two years at a cost of £4,200. If Members are minded, having considered the three alternative options, to direct that this formal wear continue to be issued, it is suggested that only one set of uniform, rather than two, is issued per person the cost of which can be met from within the existing approved Budgets.

The decision not to continue issuing this formal wear to Station based personnel has already taken place following extensive consultation. This decision however is seen as a short-term measure pending the roll out of the national uniform at the conclusion of the work undertaken by the Integrated Clothing Project.

RESOLVED: That one set of formal uniform clothing continue to be issued to all Officers.

2.06/05 INTEGRATED CLOTHING PROJECT

The Committee received a report (Agenda item 6 – not reproduced) and were asked to consider whether the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFERS) should continue to participate in the national Integrated Clothing Project (ICP) for the joint procurement of uniform and corporate wear.

Members were reminded that approximately eighteen months ago the Fire Authority had signed up in principle to this project and as set out in paragraph 2 of the report (not reproduced) the benefits of such a scheme remain unchanged.

Over the past eighteen months a Project Team has progressed the project to a point where all forty-seven English Fire and Rescue Authorities have now registered their willingness to explore the option of a fully managed approach. With regard to funding the ODPM have continued its dialogue with the Treasury and has secured additional funding to support the work during 2005/2006. This additional injection of funds will enable the project to continue until April 2006 with no direct costs being incurred by participating Fire Authorities.

This announcement does not however cover expenditure for 2006/2007, which ODPM have stated they will not fund. It is therefore anticipated that the forty-seven Fire Authorities will jointly cover the costs and having received notification on the projected costs for 2006/2007, RBFERS will need to find £7,115.00 which can be met

from within existing approved budgets and will cover a number of issues as summarised in paragraph 8 of the report (not reproduced).

Due to the significance of this project together with the commitment from the ODPM to see the project succeed and the fact that all forty-seven Fire Authorities have signed up in principle it is recommended that the Fire Authority continue to participate in this scheme.

RESOLVED: That the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service continue to participate in the national Integrated Uniform Project to procure uniform and corporate wear and that an allocation of £7,115.00 be used to fund the project in 2006/2007 with progress reports be presented to future Executive Committee meetings as considered necessary.

2.07/04 DRAFT MEMBERS/OFFICERS PROTOCOL

The Committee's endorsement was sought (Agenda item 7 – not reproduced) to the Draft Members/Officers Protocol for recommendation to the Fire Authority.

It was reported that whilst Member/Officer relations are largely conducted based on informed understandings and arrangements derived from experience there has been no formal code or protocol to govern this working relationship. Given the recent changes to the Fire Service and as part and parcel of a commitment to review and where necessary improve all aspects of the Fire Authority's Corporate Governance and related procedure, it is suggested that this is the appropriate time to introduce a more formalised written protocol.

Members were advised that the Draft Protocol had been considered and approved by the Standards Committee at its meeting on Friday 21 January 2005. In supporting the Draft Protocol Members were of the opinion that the Protocol be the subject of a review in six months time and any amendments be presented to a future meeting of the Committee for approval and recommendation to the Fire Authority.

RESOLVED: That, subject to a review taking place in six months time, the Draft/Member Protocol be endorsed and referred to the Fire Authority with a recommendation that it be approved and adopted.

2.08/05 SINGLE TENDER ACTION – FIRE PRECAUTION WORKS AT NEWBURY FIRE STATION

The Committee's approval was sought (Agenda item 8 – not reproduced) to authorise the Procurement and Facilities Manager to procure and award a contract under single tender action to undertake the installation of Fire Precaution works at Newbury Fire Station.

After tenders for the works at Newbury Fire Station were obtained in May 2004, the company who had submitted the lowest tender then declined the works so the tender was awarded to the second lowest tenderer. Following further consultation with the

Fire Safety Inspecting Officer, the scope of the works changed resulting in the cost of the tender increasing from £18,250 to £20,690, which requires Committee approval in accordance with the Authority's Standing Orders.

RESOLVED: That in accordance with Standing Orders Relating to Contracts No. 10, (a), (d) and (f), the Procurement and Facilities Manager be authorised to award the Contract under single tender action.

2.09/05 SINGLE TENDER ACTION – REPAIRS TO WALL AT FRONT OF BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS

The Committee's approval was sought (Agenda item 9 – not reproduced) to authorise the Procurement and Facilities Manager to procure and award a contract under single tender action to undertake the repair of the wall at the front of Brigade Headquarters.

The brick wall is in need of urgent repair in a number of areas due to impact and weather damage/deterioration. It has also slipped on its damp proof course thereby leaving it in a dangerous condition which has risk implications for the Authority should an injury occur as a result of the wall being in a precarious state.

A contractor currently working on site undertaking the changes to the front entrance has provided a quote in the sum of £3,945 to remove and replace the length of wall in question, re-point and install brick tiers/end supports as required.

RESOLVED: That in accordance with Standing Orders Relating to Contracts No. 10, (d) (e) and SO22(17), the Procurement and Facilities Manager be authorised to award the Contract under single tender action.

2.10/05 SINGLE TENDER ACTION – ADDITIONAL WORKS TO THE ELECTRICAL REWIRE AT BRACKNELL FIRE STATION

The Committee's approval was sought (Agenda item 10 – not reproduced) to authorise the Procurement and Facilities Manager to procure and award a contract under single tender action to undertake additional works to the electrical re-wire at Bracknell Fire Station. Members were advised that retrospective ratification is required as the work has already been undertaken on the grounds of safety.

During the re-wire of the electrical cables and the renewal of the distribution boards by Electrical Power Systems, additional circuits to the distribution board were identified as being wired in Vulcanised India Rubber cables. As this type of wire can fail catastrophically at any time it is necessary to replace the wiring circuits in the kitchen, muster bay and vehicle charging circuits as they were found to be in a dangerous condition. In addition the external light and conduit to the drill tower also needed to be replaced as they have corroded. The estimated cost of the additional work is £9,000.

RESOLVED: That in accordance with Standing Orders Relating to Contracts

No. 10, (d) (e) and SO22(17), the Procurement and Facilities Manager be authorised to award the Contract under single tender action.

2.11/05 ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEM: SINGLE TENDER ACTION – SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT FOR BRIGADE’S BREATHING APPARATUS SETS

The Committee’s approval as sought (Agenda item 10 – not reproduced) to authorise the Procurement and Facilities Manager to procure and award a contract under single tender action to Scott Health and Safety (formally Sabre the set manufacturer’s) to undertake the servicing and maintenance (Total Care) of the Brigade’s Breathing Apparatus Sets for a further two years at an estimated cost of £12,124 per annum.

The Sabre Contour Breathing Apparatus Set forms an integral part of the personal protective equipment (PPE) provided in order that Fire-Fighters can, where required, operate safely in irrespirable atmosphere. The servicing and maintenance schedules are laid down by the manufacturer’s to ensure the apparatus remains in a safe and satisfactory condition.

The current contract, which expires in July 2005, as well as the proposed extension provides certain resilience should a significant number of breathing apparatus sets become unserviceable, a necessity in order for RBFRS to provide the required standard of service delivery. Members were advised that whilst RBFRS has its own Breathing Apparatus Technician, he is not in a position to cater with the additional workload should we wish to maintain the equipment in-house. This would place the Brigade in a vulnerable position in the event of a large number of defects occurring and/or the technician being absent from the workplace through accident or design.

RESOLVED: That in accordance with Standing Orders Relating to Contracts No. 10, (a), (e) (f) and SO21, the Procurement and Facilities Manager be authorised to award the Contract under single tender action.

2.12/05 FIRECONTROL PROJECT – REGIONAL FIRE CONTROL CENTRES

The Committee was advised (Agenda item 11 – not reproduced) of the current position regarding the FiReControl Project, which proposes to replace the current Control Rooms in the English Fire Service with nine Regional Control Rooms, as mooted in the White Paper ‘Our Fire and Rescue Service’ in July 2003.

The Fire Authority has been briefed on the emerging issues from the White Paper, including that of Regional Controls at its meetings on 10 October and 17 December 2003. The National Framework, mentioned in Section 22 of the Act was first issued as a draft in December 2003, was published in July 2004 and given force by the implementation of the Act in October 2004. Sections 2.14 and 2.17 of the Framework, a copy of which was presented as Appendix 1 (not reproduced), outline the ODFM’s expectations regarding the establishment of Regional Control Centres.

Concerns raised by this Authority were relayed to the ODPM through the South-East Regional Management Board, who responded in over thirty pages, which are available on the ODPM Web-Site at:

http://odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_fire/document/page/odpm_fire_027584.pdf

In summary the FiReControl Project is proceeding rapidly notwithstanding that many critical outstanding issues have yet to be agreed as set out in paragraph 8 of the report (not reproduced).

The Executive Committee at one of its previous meetings asked that a report on the FiReControl Project be presented to the Fire Authority at its meeting on Wednesday 9 February 2005. Whilst this can still be done if Members so desire it is at present, as this report demonstrates, impossible to provide the Authority with a definitive assessment of the impact that this project will have on the Fire Authority and the services it delivers. As there is insufficient information to reach an informed conclusion it is considered premature to place this matter before the Authority at its February meeting for consideration and determination.

Members were advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 21 July 2004, having considered this issue, proposed that Officers should prepare "a position statement for confirmation by the Fire Authority regarding the FiReControl Project. However in the circumstances and until more definitive information is available, Officers proposed that the Fire Authority's position should be as follows:

"This Authority recognises the ODPM's intention to establish a network of Regional Control Centres and will support the initiative which improves public safety and service effectiveness. However there are many issues which are still unclear and the Authority has concerns over the rapid time-scale for implementation, the lack of both effective consultation and clear information regarding proposed governance and financial measures."

In supporting the above suggested Fire Authority position it was proposed, seconded and agreed that a letter, signed by the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer, be circulated to all Fire Authority Members advising them of the Executive Committee's decision and recording the fact that, until more definitive information is available, this is the Authority's holding position at the moment.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1 The Fire Authority's official position on the FiReControl Project as set out above be approved.**
- 2 A letter, signed by the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer, be circulated to all Fire Authority Members advising them of the Executive Committee's decision and recording the fact that, until more definitive information is available, this is the Authority's official holding position at the moment.**

2.13/05 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was **Noted** that the next meeting of the Executive Committee would be held on Monday 14 March 2005 at Brigade Headquarters commencing at 6.30pm.

2.14/05 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

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:

	Agenda item	Paragraph
14	Part II Minutes – Monday 10 January 2005	1
15	Single Tender Action – Interim Landscape Contract	7&8
15A	Additional Agenda item: Proposed Redundancy –CAD Technician	1
16	Employment Tribunals Applications Update	1

(Note: The following is a summary of the items considered in the Part II Agenda of the Fire Authority's Executive Committee meeting held on Monday 24 January 2005)

2.15/05 PART II MINUTES: 10 JANUARY 2005

The Part II Minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 10 January 2005 were received and approved as a correct record.

2.16/05 SINGLE TENDER ACTION – INTERIM LANDSCAPING CONTRACT

The Committee approved, in accordance with Standing Orders Relating to Contracts Nos 10 (a) and (f) the award of a contract under single tender action.

2.17/05 ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEM: PROPOSED REDUNDANCY – CAD TECHNICIAN

The Committee approved the post of CAD Technician being declared redundant together with the implementation of a severance package for the postholder.

2.18/05 EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS APPLICATIONS UPDATE

The Committee was advised of the current position in Employment Tribunal Applications involving the Fire Authority.

Signed: 

**Councillor Terry Mills
Chairman**

Date: 14 March 2005