

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



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MEETING: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority

DATE AND TIME: Tuesday 9 June 1998 at 6.30 pm

VENUE: Council Offices, Shute End, Wokingham

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend the above meeting at the time and date indicated, when it is proposed to deal with the business set out in the attached Agenda.

D C H Williams
Clerk to the Authority

To: MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
(D Ball, P A Barnett, Mrs C Bateson, J C G Brooks, J J Connolly, R J Day,
T P Dredge, P J Edwards, J M B Egan, C J Goodall, B W Gardner, A Gregory,
A B V P Hickley, D W Liddiard, T Mills, J Morris, Mrs K Newbound, W J E Onions,
H Parker, B J S Patman, Dr L Silverman, A W Spratling, T N Stephens,
R G Vernon-Jackson, R J Webb)

Briefing Meetings:

Conservative Group: 6.00 pm - Party Room
Labour Group: 6.00 pm - Committee Room
Liberal Democrat Group: 6.00 pm - Party Room

For Further Information regarding this meeting, contact:

Derek Morgan on Reading (0118) 932 3288

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
9 JUNE 1998



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AGENDA ITEM 3 :**MINUTES - 16 MARCH 1998****MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY HELD AT THE SHIRE HALL, SHINFIELD PARK, READING, ON MONDAY 16 MARCH 1998, COMMENCING AT 6.30 PM AND CONCLUDED AT 8.00 PM**

Present: J C G Brooks (Chairman), B J S Patman (Vice-Chairman), P A Barnett, Mrs C Bateson, J J Connolly, R J Day, T P Dredge, P J Edwards, J M B Egan, C J Goodall, B W Gardner, A B V P Hickley, D W Liddiard, T Mills, Mrs K Newbound, W J E Onions, Dr L Silverman, A W Spratling, T N Stephens, D Thomas.

2.01/98 MINUTES – 3 FEBRUARY 1998

The Minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 3 February 1998 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2.02/98 PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Authority noted that no petitions or questions from the public had been received under Standing Orders 8 and 9.

2.03/98 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**Clerk and Monitoring Officer**

The Chairman, on behalf of the Authority, welcomed Mr D C H Williams to his first meeting of the Authority, following his appointment as Clerk & Monitoring Officer.

Letter from the Fire Brigades' Union

The Chairman advised the Authority that he had received a letter from the Secretary of the Berkshire Branch of the Fire Brigades' Union.

A number of issues were referred to, including the question of minimum fire cover and areas of concern that had been raised by the Fire Brigades' Union. As had been previously agreed, it was proposed that leading members of the Authority would meet with representatives of the Union again in late autumn as part of the ongoing consultative process and dialogue.

2.04/98 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

The Authority noted that no questions from Members had been received under Standing Order 10.

2.05/98 NOTICES OF MOTION

The Authority noted that no Notices of Motion had been received under Standing Order 12

2.06/98 POLITICAL GROUPS

The Authority considered a report (Agenda Item 6 – not reproduced) which advised on the formation of political groups amongst its membership.

Notices had been received advising of the creation of Labour and Liberal Democrat Groups. The Authority had been advised at its last meeting of the formation of a Conservative Group.

NOTED

2.07/98 POLITICAL BALANCE ON COMMITTEES

The Authority considered a report (Agenda Item 7 – not reproduced) on the allocation of seats on committees between the party groups, in accordance with the rules on political balance.

A proposal having been made, to which there was no dissent, it was

RESOLVED: That the allocation of seats on committees be as follows:

Sub Body	Liberal Democrat	Conservative	Labour
Urgency Committee	1	1	1
Personnel Committee	2	2	2
Budget Working Party	2	2	2
Total	5	5	5

2.08/98 APPOINTMENT OF PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Authority considered a report (Agenda Item 8 – not reproduced) inviting it to appoint members of the Personnel Committee, for the period until the Annual Meeting in June 1998.

RESOLVED: That Mrs C Bateson, J C G Brooks, J J Connolly, A B V P Hickley, W J E Onions and B J S Patman be appointed to serve as members of the Personnel Committee, for the period until the Annual Meeting in June 1998.

2.09/98 VENUE OF AUTHORITY MEETINGS

The Authority considered a report (Agenda Item 9 – not reproduced) on the question of venues for future meetings of the Authority and its sub-bodies.

RESOLVED:

- 1 That the invitation of Wokingham District Council to accommodate the Authority's Annual Meeting on 9 June 1998 be accepted, with thanks;
- 2 That the meeting to be held on 16 September 1998 (see Minute 2.10/98) be held at the Whitley Wood Fire Station, when the venues for future meetings of the Authority would be fixed; and,
- 3 That meetings of sub-bodies be held on premises owned by the Authority.

2.10/98 DATES OF MEETINGS 1998/99

The Authority considered a report (Agenda Item 10 – not reproduced) inviting it to fix the calendar of its meetings for 1998/99.

RESOLVED: That meetings of the Authority be held at 6.30 pm on

16 September 1998
 8 December 1998
 3 February 1998
 9 June 1999 (Annual Meeting).

2.11/98 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

The Authority considered a report (Agenda Item 11 – not reproduced) requesting the appointment of representatives to serve on the Fire Committee of the Local Government

Association and to attend the Association's General Assembly.

RESOLVED:

- 1 That J C G Brooks be appointed as the Authority's representative on the Fire Committee of the Local Government Association, until the Annual Meeting in 1998.
- 2 That the appointment of representatives to the Annual Assembly of the Association be deferred to the next meeting.

2.12/98 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

The Authority considered a report (Agenda Item 12 – not reproduced) advising Members of the position regarding the payment of allowances for attending conferences, and, as a result, suggesting a revision of the list of approved duties.

RESOLVED: That the following be added to Part B of the list of events for which travelling and subsistence expenses may be reimbursed to Members:

- “5 Attendance at an external non-political, non-trade, conference/seminar/meeting in the United Kingdom discussing matters of direct interest to the Authority, where this has previously been approved by the Authority, a committee or the Clerk, under his delegated powers.”

2.13/98 CONTINUITY OF POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The Authority considered a report (Agenda Item 13 – not reproduced) seeking confirmation that the existing policies and practices of Berkshire County Council would continue in effect, until reviewed.

During discussion, reference was made to the practice agreed by the County Council's Public Protection Committee in relation to the issue of press releases, whereby the names and contact numbers of each of the party spokesmen had been included on releases made. It was accepted that this practice should be followed in respect of press releases relating to the Authority.

RESOLVED: That the existing policies and practices of Berkshire County Council, as applicable to the Authority and as implemented within the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service continue to be applied.

2.14/98 SCHEME OF DELEGATION TO OFFICERS

The Authority considered a report (Agenda Item 14 – not reproduced) inviting it to agree a proposed scheme of delegation of powers to officers.

RESOLVED:

- 1 That the Scheme of Delegation to Officers, as submitted, be approved subject to the following minor amendments:
 - a to substitute “£1,000” for £10,000” in paragraph 16(a); and
 - b that paragraph 2(g) be amended to reflect the position of there being 3 chief officers.
- 2 That a report be submitted to the next meeting on the mechanisms and limits in place in relation to the Chief Fire Officer’s powers relating to early retirements, on grounds of ill health, given the financial implications of such decisions.

2.15/98 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Authority considered a report (Agenda Item 15 – not reproduced) proposing the adoption of Financial Regulations.

Arising from consideration, concern was expressed about the potential breaking down of orders/contracts into smaller tranches so as to avoid the operation of the regulations. It was accepted that vigilance would need to be exercised to ensure that this did not happen, although there might be occasions when it may be appropriate to issue two contracts to the same contractor.

RESOLVED: That the Financial Regulations, as submitted, be adopted.

2.16/98 TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY 1998/99

The Authority considered a report (Agenda Item 16 – not reproduced) asking it to approve the adoption of the “CIPFA Code of Practice: Treasury Management in Local Authorities (1996)” and a Treasury Policy Statement and Strategy Statement for 1998/99 for the Authority.

RESOLVED:

- 1 That the CIPFA Code of Practice: Treasury Management in Local Authorities (1996) be adopted.
- 2 That the Treasury Policy Statement and Strategy Statement for 1998/99, as submitted,

be adopted.

2.17/98 BORROWING LIMITS FOR 1998/99

The Authority considered a report (Agenda Item 17 – not reproduced) requesting it to determine its overall borrowing limit, and the limit on the proportion of total interest payable which was payable at a variable rate.

RESOLVED: That the following determination be made for 1998/99:

- a an overall borrowing limit of £853,000;
- b a short term borrowing limit of £853,000; and
- c a maximum limit of 100% of total interest paid, being on variable rate loans.

2.18/98 SUPPLEMENTARY CREDIT APPROVAL

The Authority considered a report (Agenda Item 18 – not reproduced) advising Members of the issue of a supplementary credit approval (SCA) of £50,000 for 1998/99, in respect of transitional costs arising in connection with the establishment of the Authority.

RESOLVED: That any eligible costs arising from the transition be charged against the supplementary credit approval.

2.19/98 CHARGING FOR SERVICES

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 19 – not reproduced) seeking approval to the charging policies and proposed charges for services in 1998/99.

Arising from consideration of the report, Members expressed their delight with the results of the televised programme relating to the work of a watch at Newbury Fire Station. The Authority asked the Chief Fire Officer to pass on its congratulations to the crew.

RESOLVED:

- 1 That the fees, as set out in Appendix A of the report, be adopted.
- 2 That the Chief Fire Officer be authorised to increase charges annually, in line with the firefighters' annual pay award.

2.20/98 PAY AND REWARD STRATEGY AND OFFICER CAR USER POLICIES

The Authority considered a report (Agenda Item 20 – not reproduced) which proposed that consideration of the Pay and Reward Strategy and Officers' Car User Policies be referred to the Personnel Committee for determination.

RESOLVED: That the Personnel Committee be authorised to determine, by 1 April 1998, the Authority's Pay and Reward Strategy and Officers' Car User Policies.

2.21/98 COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW: "WORKING TOGETHER" – OPTIONS FOR COLLABORATION AND RE-ORGANISATION IN THE FIRE SERVICE

The Authority considered a report (Agenda Item 21 – not reproduced) advising Members of the progress to date in respect of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review and of the Chief Fire Officer's response to the "Working Together" consultation document.

The Chief Fire Officer highlighted particular points which were included in the response.

NOTED

2.22/98 WHITLEY WOOD FIRE STATION: WILLOW WALL

The Authority considered a report (Agenda Item 22 – not reproduced) seeking approval to include the re-building of the willow wall at Whitley Wood Fire Station in the 1998/99 Capital Programme. Photographs were circulated illustrating the damaged willow wall.

The Chief Fire Officer explained what had occurred to cause the problems with the willow wall. After discussion, it was

RESOLVED: That the re-building of the willow wall at Whitley Wood Fire Station be included in the 1998/99 Capital Programme.

2.23/98 MINUTES OF SUB-BODIES

The Authority received the Minutes of meetings of sub-bodies since its last meeting, viz Appointments Panel – 11 February 1998.

NOTED**2.24/98 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: That, under Section 100A(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
25	Part 2 Minutes: 3 February 1998	8
26	Banking Arrangements	8
27	Insurances	8
28	Treasury Management Consultants	8
29	Paid Leave of Absence	1
30	Part 2 Minutes of Sub-Bodies	1.

The following are summaries of those items considered in Part 2 of the Authority's agenda.

2.25/98 PART 2 MINUTES – 3 FEBRUARY 1998

The part 2 Minutes of the Authority held on 3 February 1998 were approved.

2.26/98 INSURANCES

The Authority approved insurance arrangements, to cover its operations, to take effect from 1 April 1998.

2.27/98 BANKING ARRANGEMENTS

The Authority appointed Barclays Bank plc as its bankers for 2 years, commencing on 1 April 1998. The Authority also agreed to use the automated accounting link, Barclays Business Master ii.

2.28/98 TREASURY MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

The Authority agreed the appointment of Sector Treasury Services Limited as treasury management consultants for 1998/99.

2.29/98 PAID LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The Authority approved the grant of paid leave to Firefighter R Joseph to enable him to attend training in America in preparation for competing in the Europe Cup, and the European and Commonwealth Games.

2.30/98 PART 2 MINUTES OF SUB-BODIES

The Authority received the Part 2 Minutes of the Appointments Panel – 11 February 1998.

2.31/98 VOTE OF THANKS

The Chairman, on behalf of the Authority, expressed thanks and appreciation for the work and service of D K H Over and R F Penfold, as Acting Joint Clerks to the Authority.

AGENDA ITEM 4(a) : URGENCY COMMITTEE - 27 APRIL 1998: MINUTES

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY URGENCY COMMITTEE HELD AT BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS, TILEHURST ON MONDAY 27 APRIL 1998 COMMENCING AT 6.00 PM AND CONCLUDED AT 7.15 PM

Present: J C G Brooks, J J Connolly, B J S Patman

1.01/98 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Mr J C G Brooks be elected chairman of the Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.

1.02/98 ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman advised the Committee that he believed that it would be more appropriate to discuss its response as employers to the issues raised in agenda item 4 in part II of the meeting. However, in view of the presence of representatives of the Fire Brigades Union and their concerns regarding the proposals, he indicated that he would invite the representatives to address the Committee on those concerns prior to moving the exclusion of the press and public.

1.03/98 MEMBERSHIP OF THE APPEALS PANEL

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 2 - not reproduced) inviting it to approve the appointment of Mr J M B Egan as a member of the Appeals Panel.

RESOLVED: That Mr J M B Egan be appointed to the Appeals Panel.

1.04/98 MODERNISING LOCAL GOVERNMENT - IMPROVING SERVICE THROUGH BEST VALUE

The Committee received a report (Agenda Item 3 - not reproduced) advising it of the publication of the Government's consultation paper on Best Value with a view to formulating the Authority's response to the proposals contained therein.

The Committee agreed to support the Chief Fire Officer's suggested response to the consultation paper, noting, however, that there was a need to ensure that any changes avoided

blurring of the respective responsibilities of Her Majesty's Inspectorate, the Health & Safety Executive and the District Auditor, all of whom already had roles in ensuring the quality of service provision. It was noted that the Authority would have a further opportunity to comment on the Government's proposals as the present proposals would form part of a new Local Government Bill which was expected to be published and the subject of consultation in the summer.

RESOLVED: That the proposed response to the Government's consultation paper on "Best Value" as set out in Appendix "A" of the report be approved.

1.05/98 FIRE BRIGADES' NATIONAL EMPLOYERS CONSULTATION PAPER ON NEGOTIATING OBJECTIVES

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 4 - not reproduced) inviting it to formulate its response to a consultation paper from the Fire Brigades' National Employers regarding their negotiating objectives. The Committee noted that the paper had arisen from the recent employers' conference.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that he was intending to discuss the paper in part II of the meeting, but wished to hear the views of Steve Robinson-Day and Paul Clark from the Fire Brigades Union who were present, before moving the exclusion of the press and public.

Messrs Clark and Robinson-Day welcomed the opportunity to address the Committee on such an important issue and indicated that the following were the key points to which Members should have regard:

- That it would be unwise to reduce cover until fire safety initiatives were in place.
- That Berkshire had yet to reach the point where there was the scope for the sort of flexibility envisaged.
- That the proposals were premature.
- That the FBU would object to any proposals envisaging a reduction in personnel and/or increasing hours.
- That proposals to alter sick pay entitlement were unacceptable.
- That the proposals could prove to be a disincentive to those contemplating a career in the service.
- That the existing pay formula had avoided conflict.
- That the illustrative model set out in the consultation paper offered nothing for the firefighters.
- That the need for flexibility was recognised but the FBU would expect something in

return for giving up something.

In noting these views and that the firefighters were understandably wary of the proposals, the Chairman indicated that he saw what was being proposed as something which could lead to more local flexibility at an operational level, but acknowledge the concerns expressed about losing the national pay agreement.

The Chief Fire Officer advised the Committee that the proposals should be seen as a vehicle to change rather than the answer in themselves. The current conditions of service were recognised as being very prescriptive and detailed, and therefore not necessarily conducive to reflecting local needs. He believed that the type of flexibility being proposed could be advantageous to both the Authority and its staff as it could also lead to improved conditions in recognition of the local circumstances. He stressed that the way forward must be to establish a good contact between staff and management to ensure a means of negotiating the best mutual outcome.

Having heard the views of Messrs Robinson-Day and Clark, the Chairman thanked them for attending the meeting and indicated that the Committee would be considering carefully what they had said.

1.06/98 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and 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
4 Fire Brigades' National Employers' Consultation Paper on Negotiating Objectives	11
6 Single Tender Action - Whitley Wood Fire Station: Willow Wall	8 & 9

The following is a summary of the matter dealt with in part II of the meeting:

**1.07/98 FIRE BRIGADES' NATIONAL EMPLOYERS CONSULTATION
PAPER ON NEGOTIATING OBJECTIVES**

The Committee discussed the consultation paper in the light of the representations which had been made on behalf of the Fire Brigades' Union and agreed:

That consideration of the Authority's response to the National Employer's consultation paper on negotiating objectives be deferred until a further meeting of the Urgency Committee at 6.00 pm on Tuesday 19 May 1998; and,

That the Chief Fire Officer be requested to prepare a suggested response to the consultation paper for consideration by the Committee at the next meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 4(B) : URGENCY COMMITTEE - 19 MAY 1998: MINUTES**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE URGENCY COMMITTEE HELD AT BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS, DEE ROAD, TILEHURST ON TUESDAY 19 MAY 1998 COMMENCING AT 6.00 PM AND CONCLUDED AT 6.30 PM**

Present: J C G Brooks (Chairman), J J Connolly, B J S Patman

2.01/98 MINUTES - 27 APRIL 1998

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 April 1998 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2.02/98 GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PAPERS ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 2 - not reproduced) inviting it to consider the issues raised by the latest Government consultation papers on the future arrangements for local government finance with a view to formulating the Authority's response to the proposals.

In accepting the views which the Authority Treasurer suggested should be put in response to the papers, the Committee noted that a further consultation paper had been issued in relation to the Firemen's Pension Scheme. In view of this, it was agreed that a report on this issue should be put to the Authority's meeting on 9 June 1998.

RESOLVED:

- 1 That the suggested responses set out in the report to the following issues be approved:
 - Business Rates (Appendix 1, Paragraph 1.3)
 - Improving Local Financial Accountability (Appendix 1, Paragraph 2.3)
 - Capital Finance (Appendix 1, Paragraph 3.3)
- 2 That a report on the Firemen's Pension Scheme consultation paper be presented to the Authority's meeting on 9 June 1998.

2.03/98 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
4	Part II Minutes - 27 April 1998	11
5	National Employers Negotiating Objectives	11

The following is a summary of the matters dealt with in part II of the meeting:

2.04/98 PART II MINUTES - 27 APRIL 1998

The part II minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 1998 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2.05/98 NATIONAL EMPLOYERS OBJECTIVES

The Committee discussed the Authority's response to the Fire Brigades' National Employers consultation paper on negotiating objectives, and agreed the following response:

"The Combined Fire Authority wishes to respond positively to the debate which has been initiated. There are many pressures facing authorities and more change can be anticipated in coming months with the Government's proposals on best value, local democracy and funding of services. However, it may be too simplistic to expect a simple yes or no to the questions posed.

A major concern in the debate locally is the impact any proposed changes might have on employee relations. As a service which prides itself on high standards which are achieved through the dedication and commitment of its staff and firefighters in particular, it is important that every effort is made to secure change through negotiation with employee representatives. There will be a major task in convincing employees and their representatives of the value of these proposals.

If the questions b to d are a continuum (radical change to minimal change) then this Authority is nearer to the radical change position on the spectrum. There is a recognition that change within the employment framework will need to be secured if future obligations are to be delivered. However, it is an aspiration that cannot be realised at any cost.

Turning now to the specific questions, our response would be:

- a Yes, in principle. However, there needs to be much more consultation on the contents of the national framework and the elements which are open to variation locally. Also the mechanisms for achieving variation will need to be clearly articulated. It is our belief that a framework which gives no safeguards to employees will prove unattainable and unworkable.
- b Whilst tending to this option, the authority is not in the position of agreeing an

open ended commitment. The full implication of any proposed offer and the benefits which are being secured will need extensive consultation. However, in principle the Authority is willing to consider and embrace significant change.

- c No. This is operationally unworkable and can not achieve any positive outcome.
- d No. It is essential to have a clearer vision for the future and piecemeal incremental change will not be sufficient to meet the needs of the service.

It is essential that there is extensive consultation with employers and staff side over the shape that any future framework might take. This Authority looks forward to participating positively in the debate.”

AGENDA ITEM 10 : CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 9 June 1998
Officer Contributing: Clerk & Monitoring Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To approve the arrangements for future meetings of the Authority.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to consider the matter and RESOLVE accordingly.

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF PROPOSED ACTION

There are no apparent financial implications.

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1 Provisional dates for the future meetings of the Authority have previously been agreed by Members. These are:

- 16 September 1998
- 8 December 1998
- 3 February 1999
- 9 June 1999 (Annual Meeting)

2 The Authority is invited to approve these dates and agree the principle of where future meetings should be held. The next meeting will be held at Whitley Wood Fire Station, where the accommodation includes not only a room in which the meeting itself may be held, but also three separate rooms where the party groups may hold their pre-meetings. Other fire stations would not so readily offer such accommodation and indeed, there may be difficulties obtaining all the required facilities at certain of the Council offices given the pressure on their accommodation for meetings. In the circumstances, given its central location in the county and proximity to the M4 motorway and a bus route from Reading, the Authority may feel that the most appropriate place for future meetings would be the Whitley Wood Fire Station.

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Contact Officer: Derek Morgan, Committee Administrator: (0118) 932 2288

AGENDA ITEM 11 : APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES AND APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 9 June 1998
Officer Contributing: Clerk & Monitoring Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To invite the Authority to re-appoint the Personnel and Urgency Committees, and the Budget Working Party; and to appoint a representative on the Fire Committee of the Local Government Association and up to four representatives to attend the Association's General Assembly.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to RESOLVE:

1 That the Personnel Committee be re-appointed with the following membership:

2 Conservative, 2 Labour, 2 Liberal Democrat

2 That the Urgency Committee be re-appointed with the following membership:

1 Conservative, 1 Labour, 1 Liberal Democrat

3 That the Budget Working Party be re-appointed with the Following membership:

1 Conservative, 1 Labour, 1 Liberal Democrat

4 That be appointed as the Authority's representative on the Fire Committee of the Local Government Association for the remainder of the municipal year; and,

5 That be appointed to represent the Authority at the General Assembly of the Association.

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF PROPOSED ACTION

There are no financial implications.

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 Under Standing Order 27, the Authority shall every year at the Annual Meeting decide by resolution which committees it intends to establish as "Standing Committees" and shall appoint Members to each standing committee.
- 2 The Authority is accordingly invited to re-appoint the Personnel and Urgency Committees and approve their membership which is currently as follows:

Personnel Sub-Committee:

Mrs C Bateson, J C G Brooks, J J Connolly, A B V P Hickley, W J E Onions,
B J S Patman

Urgency Committee:

J C G Brooks, J J Connolly, B J S Patman

Budget Working Party:

J C G Brooks, J J Connolly, B J S Patman

- 3 The Committee is also required to appoint a representative on the Fire Committee of the Local Government Association and up to four representatives to attend the Association's General Assembly. The Fire Committee is due to meet on 17 November 1998 and 2 March 1999. The next meeting of the General Assembly will take place on 7 July 1998 as part of the Association's annual conference in Bournemouth.
- 4 At the last meeting the Authority appointed the Chairman to be its representative on the Fire Committee until this meeting, but deferred a decision on appointments to the General Assembly. Those appointed to the latter are granted votes (on issues of direct relevance to their statutory duties and responsibilities) on a population basis, as result of which this Authority will exercise 15 votes. In addition, combined fire authorities are entitled to one "corporate vote" at the General Assembly on issues such as the election of the chairman, and on issues relating to the Association's estimated expenditure and subscriptions.

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Contact Officer: Derek Morgan, Committee Administrator: (0118) 932 2288

**AGENDA ITEM 12 : REVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS 1997/98 AND
BUSINESS PRIORITIES 1998/99**

To: Combined Fire Authority
Date: 9 June 1998
Officers Contributing: Chief Fire Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members of the achievements of the Fire and Rescue Service against the declared business targets for the past year and to give notice of those priorities intended for the current financial year.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to:

- 1 NOTE: The achievements in respect of the 1997/98 targets and**
- 2 RESOLVE: That the inclusion of the 1998/99 priorities in the Fire and Rescue Service's published Annual Report be approved.**

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

There are no financial implications.

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 As is now the established practice, it is the intention that the Brigade publishes an Annual Report which will both reflect upon the past year, including an indication of achievements against the declared objectives, and set the business priorities for 1998/99.
- 2 The production of the Annual Report has, this year, been slightly delayed in order to embrace the full details of the new structure and the impact of the move to Combined Authority status. That said, it is anticipated that it will be available for distribution in July and brought to the September meeting of the Authority for formal endorsement.
- 3 The Chief Fire Officer is pleased to be able to report that each of the agreed objectives for the past year (reproduced at Appendix A) were appropriately discharged and regular reports as to progress were made to the County Council's Public Protection Committee, Joint Fire Committee and, more latterly the Shadow Combined Fire Authority.
- 4 With regard to the priorities for the current year, Members will appreciate that the Service is at present contemplating a number of significant issues which, if progressed, could have impact upon the way that service is delivered and supported at local level.

- 5 With this in mind, the Chief Fire Officer is suggesting the adoption of 'broad based' overarching priorities for publication in the Annual Report which would then enable more detailed work to be undertaken without the potential for future negation of the individual priorities.
- 6 To underpin each of the priorities will be detailed project plans that will form part of the business planning process for each of the Brigade's Directorates. These will be the subject of regular monitoring by the Chief Fire Officer and senior managers and will be available for examination upon request.
- 7 Members will recognise that each of the submitted priorities will have impact and implications across the spectrum of service references and that the continued workload on the Brigade as a whole in addressing these issues will be substantial.
- 8 Clearly, progress reports will be made to the Authority at appropriate meetings.

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

Fire and Rescue Service: Annual Report and 1997/98 Business Targets.

Contact Officer: David Harper, Chief Fire Officer: (0118) 932 2225

BUSINESS PLANS AND TARGETS 1997-1998

- To maintain service delivery both to the public and internally to the current levels and achieve improvement where possible within present resource constraints.
- To continue with the in-depth planning process required to achieve an effective transition to combined fire authority status.
- To continue with the already established process to address the Health and Safety Improvement Notice.
- To review the management structure of the Brigade to ensure it's capability to support the future vision and culture including a positive move towards an all embracing community led service delivery ethos.

OVERARCHING PRIMARY PRIORITIES 1998 - 1999

- To continue to maintain service delivery both to the public and internally to the current levels and achieve improvement where possible within present resource constraints.
- To continue with the next phase of the agreed and already established programme to address identified Health and Safety issues.
- To commence preparations for the Brigade to embrace the principles of Best Value in respect of all activities.
- To actively investigate the potential for collaboration with other Brigades/Services in respect of areas of common interest.
- To commence preparations to enable the Brigade to move towards a competency based training ethos in reflection of the national direction.
- To expand and further develop the community safety principle, to include the forging of meaningful local partnerships, that will enable greater emphasis to be given to the prevention of fire, thereby resulting in a safer environment.
- To undertake a meaningful review of revenue spending.
- To assess the long term Capital Investment needs of the Brigade including an exploration of the potential of the Private Finance Initiative in respect of those needs.
- To continue to participate actively in, and influence, national debate, initiatives and thinking.

AGENDA ITEM 13 : SERVICE GUARANTEES AND CUSTOMER CARE POLICIES

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 9 June 1998
Officer Contributing: Chief Fire Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To review the Authority's Service Guarantees and Customer Care Policies.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to RESOLVE:

- 1 That the Service Guarantee for Fire Fighting and Rescues (Appendix A), to be printed in booklet form, be approved;**
- 2 That secondary Service Guarantees for:**
 - Fire Safety Certification**
 - Fire Safety Training**
 - Fire Safety in Places of Public Entertainment, Licensed Premises and Fire Safety Education**

to be printed in A4 format, be approved,
- 3 That the existing strategy for publicising the service guarantees be re-affirmed.**
- 4 That the co-operation of the Constituent Authorities be sought for distribution of the service guarantee**
- 5 That Customer Care Cards for:**
 - Fire Fighting and Rescues**
 - Fire Safety Guidance**
 - Industrial Training**

continue to be issued
- 6 That the Chief Fire Officer report annually on the results of monitoring the service guarantees.**

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The cost of printing the Fire Fighting and Rescues Service Guarantee and the Customer Care Cards and Business Reply Service is approximately £1,000, provision for which exists within the printing budget.

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 At its meeting of 16 March 1998 the Fire Authority agreed to continue the County Council's policies and procedures until such times as they were reviewed. Included in those policies and procedures are those applying to Service Guarantees, Customer Care and a Code of Courtesy.
- 2 The Fire and Rescue Service developed a primary Service Guarantee for Fire Fighting and Rescues, incorporating the County Council's Code of Courtesy, published in booklet form. The Brigade also produced secondary guarantees, covering, Fire Safety Certificates, Fire Safety Training and Fire Safety in Places of Public Entertainment, Licensed Premises and Fire Safety Education. These service guarantees were introduced in 1993 and reviewed in late 1995. The primary service guarantee was distributed at all Brigade main receptions, Shire Hall, public libraries and at all Brigade Open Days and other similar events. The secondary guarantees were distributed to customers when seeking advice about the relevant service.
- 3 Closely linked to the service guarantees were customer care cards. These included a brief questionnaire on the way certain of the Brigade's services were delivered and covered, Fire Fighting and Rescues, Fire Safety Guidance and Industrial Training. The information was printed on a post card and issued to service users at incidents or customers of specific services who returned the questionnaires via the Business Reply Service.
- 4 The responses were analysed and presented to the Public Protection Committee annually. This information allowed both the Fire Authority and Chief Fire Officer to monitor the degree of user satisfaction and to highlight success and areas where services could be improved.
- 5 Stocks of service guarantees are now exhausted and it is appropriate to review the practice of issuing service guarantees and monitoring performance. It is likely that reviews of services, including consulting with users of services, will form a major part of the Government's proposed Best Value initiatives. The existence of service guarantees and customer care cards will assist the Fire Authority to comply with these requirements.
- 6 The following draft service guarantees have been circulated to Members and are available from Derek Morgan on (0118) 932 2288:
 - Fire Fighting and Rescues
 - Fire Safety Certification
 - Fire Safety Training
 - Fire Safety in Places of Public Entertainment, Licensed Premises and Fire

Safety Education

7 If members are minded to adopt the revised guarantees it is suggested that the existing practice of producing the primary guarantee in booklet form and the secondary guarantees in A4 format be continued to reduce costs. Copies of the draft Customer Care Cards for:

- Fire Fighting and Rescues
- Fire Safety Guidance
- Industrial Training

have been circulated to Members as background papers.

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

1 Agenda and Minutes - Berkshire County Council's Public Protection Committee: 21 May 1993, 1 October 1994, 18 March 1994, 27 May 1994, 27 January 1995, 17 March 1995, 29 September 1995

Contact Officer: David Noonan: (0118) 932 2250

APPENDIX A**ABOUT THE SERVICE**

The Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's Fire and Rescue Service is responsible throughout the county for:

- fire fighting
- rescuing people
- fire safety advice and enforcement
- industrial fire training

We employ over 600 firefighters and maintain 20 fire stations throughout Berkshire. In a typical year we receive around 28,000 emergency telephone calls, rescue over 500 people and attend over 14,000 incidents.

The Fire Authority seeks continually to improve on the high standards of our service and regularly reviews fire cover throughout the county to ensure maximum response to any call for help in Berkshire.

Remember - For Emergencies
Dial 999

GUARANTEES**Fire Fighting**

We guarantee to respond to all calls made reporting a fire or suspected fire 24 hours a day immediately the call is passed to us.

We guarantee to send at least two fire engines to any property fire unless it is known to be small (eg chimney, car, grass).

We guarantee the first fire engine will arrive:

within 5 minutes for major town centres and industrial complexes

within 10 minutes for suburbs and built up areas of smaller towns

within 20 minutes for all other areas

These times may be modified if other fires occur at the same time, in severe weather or unusually heavy traffic.

We guarantee to use approved skills, equipment and procedures to save life, protect people from injury and minimise damage to property.

We guarantee to provide emergency fire fighting services in Berkshire free of charge.

We guarantee our firefighters will be trained to a high skill level.

We guarantee that if you are not at your premises we will endeavour to ensure security is passed to your representative or to the police before we leave.

We guarantee to investigate the cause of each fire. Additionally, if the property belongs to you, we will provide you with our conclusions and details of our response times on request, for which a fee will be charged.

We guarantee to provide the following information on request:

- the location of your nearest fire station
- the number and type of fire appliance you could expect to receive in the event of an incident
- any specific plans for fire fighting at your premises

Rescues

We guarantee to respond immediately to all calls made about people trapped, injured, facing danger to life, or where the environment is threatened. We will also respond to calls reporting trapped animals.

We guarantee to provide our emergency rescue service free of charge.

Remember for emergencies Dial 999

ABOUT SERVICE GUARANTEES

Our aim is to provide top quality value for money services and to let the residents of Berkshire know what services are available and what standards to expect.

In addition to fire fighting and rescues the Fire Service operates a number of other service guarantees which may be obtained from Brigade Headquarters or by telephoning:

Fire Safety Certification: 0118 9
 Fire Safety Training: 0118 9
 Fire Safety in Places of Public Education,
 Licensed Premises and Fire Safety Education: 0118 9

We hope you will find these guarantees useful. We have also established a Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Code of Courtesy and a Complaints Procedure.

If you need to find out more about service guarantees, wish to make a comment on them, complain about the Fire Authority's service, or need help with any other Fire Authority service, contact us on (0118) 945 2888.

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY CODE OF COURTESY

Quality of Service

We guarantee to treat you with respect and in a friendly manner. We are publishing Service Guarantees which enable you to judge whether you have had fair treatment. If, for any reason, we fail to meet a guarantee we will tell you why and what we will do about it.

Responsive Treatment

We guarantee that we will respond immediately to urgent enquiries, and to more general enquiries within 7 days of receipt. We will tell you what action we propose and how long it will take.

Fair Treatment

We guarantee that we will treat everyone with dignity and without discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability or religion.

Consultation

We guarantee that we will seek the views of local people on major issues affecting them and take account of their views in decision making.

Open Government

We guarantee that all Fire Authority meetings are open to the public (except for certain confidential items defined by law) and there is a Public Question Time at every meeting. Papers are available from the Clerk to the Authority at least three days before each meeting. Copies are also available at main libraries. For further information on these meetings and the arrangements for Public Question Time, telephone (0118) 9.....

Comments and Complaints

We guarantee to welcome your comments on improving our services and to seek to resolve any complaints. If you do not receive satisfaction from your service locally, please contact the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, 103 Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading RG30 4FS.

AGENDA ITEM 14 : COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURES

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 9 June 1998
Officer Contributing: Chief Fire Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To review the Service's Complaints Policy and Procedures.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to consider the report and RESOLVE

- 1 That the Complaints Procedure, attached as Appendix 'A' be adopted;**
- 2 That the Complaints Procedure be incorporated into the Authority's Service Guarantees;**
- 3 That the Complaints Procedure be displayed in all Fire Authority premises;**
- 4 That a Complaints Review Panel comprising of three elected members be appointed; and,**
- 5 That the Chief Fire Officer report annually to the Fire Authority on the monitoring of complaints.**

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications in adopting the Complaints Procedure, although the cost of printing service guarantees is approx. £1,000, which could be met from the Brigade's printing budget.

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 At its meeting on 16 March 1998, the Fire Authority agreed to continue the County Council's policies and practices until such time as they were reviewed. Included in those policies and procedures were those applying to complaints about the service provided. Berkshire County Council adopted a formal policy of encouraging the public to complain when the Service failed to meet public expectations as part of its policy to maintain good quality services. This included recording details of complaints and reporting to the service committee on an annual basis on the number and types of complaints, what action was taken and how the Service reacted to complaints.**

- 2 The Fire and Rescue Service has found the Complaints Monitoring procedures to be a proactive benefit in ensuring that the service is provided to a high quality and any shortcomings are identified and rectified. It has to be said though that the number of complaints is low with an average of less than 20 over the last four years compared with an average of 120 letters of appreciation over the same period. All of the complaints were resolved by the officer investigating the complaint. The Brigade has adopted the practice of responding to all complaints and assuming that the complainant is satisfied with the action taken unless he/she responds further within one month.
- 3 The Complaints Procedure also needs to be seen in the context of the Brigade's Service Guarantees and Customer Care Policies which are the subject of a separate report. The existence of procedures to deal effectively with complaints and gauge 'customer opinion' of services is likely to feature in the Government's Best Value initiatives. The procedures will also need to reflect that the Fire Authority is now an independent authority, rather than a multi-service local authority.
- 4 The Chief Fire Officer recommends that the Complaints Procedure is revised as per the attached Appendix 'A'. This new procedure would involve setting up an ad-hoc members panel to deal with any complaints which cannot be resolved at officer level. To ensure that the public is aware of the procedure it would benefit from being incorporated into the service guarantees and also displayed on Fire Authority premises. Members may also wish to be advised of the level of complaints about the Service, and this could be achieved by an annual monitoring report.
- 5 In 1997/98 the Brigade received 15 complaints from the public, which compares with 25 in 1996/97 and 12 in 1995/96. The complaints are broken down as follows:

	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98
Operations	10	17	13
Fire Safety & Technical	1	6	1
Corporate Support	1	2	1

This needs to be seen within the context of the Brigade receiving 31,653 emergency calls and attending 22,596 incidents, including false alarms during the year.

- 6 It is difficult to categorise all of the complaints as the majority are of an individual nature. However, a number of categories stand out as follows:

	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98
Manner of driving to an incident	5	10	1
Noise from appliances	-	-	4
Behaviour of member(s) of the Brigade	2	4	4
Damage to property	1	1	4

- 7 In 1996/97 the largest single cause for complaints was the manner in which the appliances were driven to incidents. This resulted in senior officers reviewing driver training. Members will note that the Brigade received only one complaint about the manner of driving to an incident in 1997/98.

- 8 All complaints are fully investigated and where they are found to be justified, procedures are reviewed and/or issues raised with members of staff.

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

Berkshire County Council - Corporate Complaints Policy & Procedures

Contact Officer: David Noonan: (0118) 932 2250

APPENDIX "A"

**ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
COMPLAINTS SERVICE**

- 1 If you have a complaint about the service you have received or have failed to receive from the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and you wish to register a complaint you may do so at your local fire station or Brigade Headquarters. You may register your complaint in person, by telephone, by fax or in writing.
- 2 If you need advice, information or help in making your complaint please contact the Director of Central Services on (0118) 932 2250, who will be happy to help.
- 3 Please give your name, address and telephone or fax number where you can be contacted as this will enable us to respond promptly. Please also tell us how you wish to be contacted.
- 4 The Fire and Rescue Service will endeavour to respond to you in writing within seven days of receipt of your complaint. If we cannot do so within that time we will contact you and advise you when we will be able to respond.
- 5 If you are not satisfied with the response you receive you should refer the matter to the Chief Fire Officer at Brigade Headquarters, 103 Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading RG30 4FS. The fax number is (0118) 959 0510.
- 6 The Chief Fire Officer will endeavour to respond within seven days. If he is unable to do so he will contact you explaining why he is unable to respond within seven days and give you a date by which he will respond.
- 7 If you are still not satisfied with the response and action taken, there is a right of appeal to the Authority. To activate this you should write to the Clerk to the Fire Authority, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, Brigade Headquarters, 103 Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 4FS.
- 8 The Clerk to the Authority will initially review your case in liaison with the Chief Fire Officer and seek to reach a settlement.
- 9 If you remain dissatisfied you can ask for your case to be reviewed by a Complaints Review Panel comprising members of the Fire Authority.

- 10 At any time you can contact the **Local Government Ombudsman** appointed by the Government to look into complaints against local authorities. The Ombudsman is independent, impartial and the service is free of charge. The address is:

The Local Government Ombudsman
The Oaks, Westwood Way, Westwood Business Park, Coventry CV4 8JB

Tel: (01203) 695999 Fax: (01203) 695902

It should be noted that the Ombudsman will not normally intervene until the Authority's complaints procedure has been exhausted.

**AGENDA ITEM 15 : CHIEF FIRE OFFICER'S DELEGATED POWERS
- MEDICAL RETIREMENTS**

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 9 June 1998
Officer Contributing: Chief Fire Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the implications of delegating to the Chief Fire Officer authority to retire operational members of the Brigade on grounds of permanent ill health.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to RESOLVE:

- 1 That the Chief Fire Officer act on behalf of the Fire Authority in taking decisions under Article 97 of the Firemen's Pension Scheme Order when in the opinion of the Brigade's Medical Adviser it becomes necessary for an operational member of the Brigade to be retired; and,**
- 2 That a subsequent report be made to the Authority on the exercise of this power.**

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF PROPOSED ACTION

These cannot be assessed as the annual number of retirees cannot be forecast and pension payments vary between individuals and any financial enhancement will be dependant on individual circumstances.

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 At its meeting on 16 March 1998 the Shadow Combined Fire Authority directed the Chief Fire Officer to submit a report to the 9 June 1998 meeting of the Combined Fire Authority in respect of the Chief Fire Officer's powers relating to early retirements on grounds of ill health given the financial implications of such decisions.**
- 2 Within the Firemen's Pension Scheme, provision is made for retirement on pension if ill health or injury renders an individual permanently incapable of continuing with operational firefighting duties.**
- 3 The scope for redeployment of firefighters into less demanding posts when they have reached the point where they are not fit for operational duties is very limited as there are few avenues within the Service for alternative employment. The Chief Fire Officer has always made best advantage of such arrangements, but this has some difficulties.**

- 4 The position at (3) above was reinforced in the Crown Court at Oxford on 8 January 1998 when the Judge in the Mander -v- Oxfordshire County Council case ruled that the Fire Authority is not entitled to retain the services of an individual undertaking a different job when that job excludes engaging in firefighting duties and if the individual is unable to undertake the work of an operational firefighter. The judgement emphasised that once an individual ceases to be a regular firefighter, he cannot be covered by the Pension Scheme and cannot remain in it. In which case there is no reason against compulsory retirement.
- 5 All operational personnel are subject to a regular fitness testing regime and a statutory three yearly medical. The medical is undertaken by the Brigade's Occupational Health provider. The objective of the provider is to help maintain the Brigade's operational personnel fit for operational duty. All those on long term sick leave are monitored during this period and have to be declared fit for undertaking operational duties by the Occupational Health Consultant before returning to work. In addition a management review is undertaken of all those on sick leave and not presenting themselves fit for operational duties. Every effort within current resources is made to return individuals to the workplace in a fit condition as soon as possible, utilising best advice, rehabilitation and other procedures as appropriate.
- 6 At no time is an operational member retired on ill health grounds without the Chief Fire Officer receiving recommendations from the Brigade's Occupational Health Consultant who will have undertaken exhaustive enquiries and received reports from any necessary specialist consultants. The Occupational Health Consultant will not recommend ill health retirement to the Chief Fire Officer until these extensive enquiries have been fully concluded.
- 7 The decision to retire an operational member compulsorily on medical grounds has been a Chief Fire Officer's delegated power only undertaken after a full and serious review and in consultation with the Brigade's Management Team, after receiving the considered opinion of the Occupational Health Consultant.
- 8 A review of the Fire Service Pension Scheme was announced in October 1993. The review began in 1994 but the report of the review and recommendation were not published before the general election in May 1997 intervened. Since then Ministers have considered the matter afresh and a consultation document has now been published which offers the opportunity for the Fire Service representative organisations to comment on the options now put forward for discussion and includes options to improve the management of ill health retirement.
- 9 The consultation document recognises that Chief Fire Officers and Fire Authorities have difficulty managing early retirements due to ill health or injury within the current arrangements of the Scheme. The example shown in Paragraph 4 above demonstrates the result if a Chief Fire Officer endeavours to manage outside the statutory pension arrangements.

- 10 The review seeks to introduce change which will provide the tools for good management both of the health of serving firefighters and of ill health retirement.

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1 Agenda and Minutes of Shadow Fire Authority, 16 March 1998.
- 2 Firemen's Pension Scheme

Contact Officer: John M Head, (0118) 932 2228

**AGENDA ITEM 16 : EMERGENCY SPECIAL SERVICE CALLS -
ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS OF LEVYING
CHARGES**

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 9 June 1998
Officers Contributing: Chief Fire Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members of the issues and implications of levying charges for the Brigade's attendance at emergency non-fire incidents.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to consider the report and RESOLVE accordingly.

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 1 The Brigade does not hold sufficient information to determine accurately the cost of attending all emergency special services where currently no charge is made.**
- 2 However, in 1997/98 the cost of attending road traffic accidents for the purpose of extricating casualties where no fire had occurred amounted to approximately £146,000.**

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 At its meeting on 18 December 1997, the Shadow Combined Fire Authority directed the Chief Fire Officer to submit a report to a future meeting of the Authority on the issues and implications of making charges for emergency special services.**
- 2 Within the terms of the Fire Services Act, 1947, the Authority has a statutory duty to provide a fire brigade for the purpose of attending calls to extinguish fire. The number of such calls attended is reflected in the formula for determining the Authority's Standard Spending Assessment; therefore, no "additional" charge can be levied in respect of such calls.**
- 3 Section 3 (i) (e) of the Act enables the Authority to use its fire brigade for other purposes which it deems appropriate and to levy a charge in respect of these at the Authority's discretion. Such "non-fire" incidents are termed generally as special services and can be classified as either non-emergency or emergency. Non-emergency special services are normally contracted on a pre-arranged basis and the Authority has agreed a scale of charges to be levied against these.**

- 4 Traditionally, fire authorities have used their fire brigades to attend a wide variety of emergency special services. These are non-fire incidents at which the equipment held by the brigade, and the expertise of brigade personnel can be used to deliver a service on the basis of immediate need. Such services may be classed as "humanitarian" and include the extrication of casualties trapped in vehicles following a road traffic, rail or air accident, persons trapped in industrial or agricultural machinery, assistance to the Ambulance Service in the retrieval of casualties from difficult locations (such as a crane tower or trench) and the extrication of animals which have become trapped and which are suffering distress (such as horses, cows or deer in rivers or ponds or dogs beneath road vehicles). Alternatively, action might be required to protect the environment, such as the containment of a spillage of toxic chemicals.
- 5 Traditionally, authorities have not levied a charge in respect of humanitarian services. In preparation for this report, the Chief Fire Officer has surveyed other fire brigades in England, Wales and Scotland, and whilst responses to this survey remain incomplete, to date, it would appear that no authority has yet determined to levy a charge for such services.
- 6 With the exception of attendances at road traffic accidents, the Chief Fire Officer is unable to identify accurately the number of emergency special services attended each year by the Brigade, there having been previously no requirement upon the brigade to maintain this information as it does not contribute to SSA. However, in 1997/98, the brigade attended 1,444 road traffic accidents. Of these, only 292 required casualties to be extricated which could therefore legitimately be determined to be emergency special services. Of the remainder, the brigade either took action to prevent the risk of the damaged vehicles becoming involved in fire (such as stopping the flow of petrol from damaged fuel lines and disconnecting vehicle batteries to prevent the risk of short circuit) or determined that no action was appropriate.
- 7 Members will appreciate that the brigade responds to any emergency call where a need for its services is perceived by the caller who might not be in a position to assess this need accurately.
- 8 The average cost of the brigade's attendance to such incidents amounts to approximately £500 per incident.
- 9 In respect of environmental emergencies, the Chief Fire Officer levies a charge for the brigade's attendance, based on the agreed scale of charges, where it is appropriate to do so. For example, in the event of a chemical spillage on private property, efforts are made (which are generally successful) to recover the cost of the brigade's attendance from the owner. Where a spillage occurs on the public highway or on common land, responsibility for disposal lies with the local authority for the area and to date, the Chief Fire Officer has not sought to recoup the brigade's costs from those sources. Members will appreciate that it may not always be clear who is responsible for creating the environmental risk in such circumstances (for example, following a road traffic accident), resulting in high administration costs and possible litigation to recover the costs from the appropriate party.
- 10 Members will wish to consider a number of factors in determining the appropriateness

of levying charges for humanitarian services:

- a The brigade has a general duty of care in undertaking its services. Evidence already exists that exercising this duty of care may be challenged through litigation (for example, the Hampshire “Digital” case). Where the Authority levies a charge for its services, it might be argued that the general requirements of this duty are enhanced through a more specific contractual obligation, thus “raising the stakes” in any potential litigation. For example, were the Authority to levy a charge against a motor insurer for the brigade’s actions in extricating a casualty from a motor vehicle, could the insurer argue that the additional damage to the vehicle occasioned in the course of that extrication exceeded that which was absolutely necessary, thereby making it no longer economically viable to repair the vehicle and causing consequential loss to the insurer?
 - b The brigade will not have been called to such incidents by the insurer. Indeed, it is likely that the brigade will not have been called by the casualty, but a third party (for example, the Police, Ambulance Service or a passer-by). Therefore, it could be argued that the brigade’s “contract” is with the caller and not the casualty or the insurer, who might therefore seek to resist the charge.
 - c It is likely that if this Authority acted in isolation insurance companies would challenge the right to recover costs in court, thus incurring legal costs.
 - d Such a contractual arrangement might be clear with some emergency special services (for example, the release of a horse from a ditch where the call for assistance was made by the owner). However, Members may wish to consider whether in such circumstances, it would be appropriate to levy a charge in all cases, or only where the action would be covered by the owner’s insurance. In such cases, the brigade would need to notify the estimated charge to the owner beforehand (as is the case for a non-emergency special service). Members might wish to consider the adverse publicity which might arise if the owner subsequently declines the service, leaving the animal in a distressed state.
 - e Similar adverse publicity could arise unless robust procedures are put in place to filter out inappropriate charges. One Ambulance Service NHS Trust has already experienced this by sending an invoice for the roadside emergency treatment charge to the widow of a casualty who died after reaching hospital.
 - f The need for a “moral” filter to protect the Authority and the difficulties in identifying the correct recipient of the charge is likely to increase administrative costs significantly, thereby reducing the benefits accrued.
- 11 Members will be aware that whilst no individual fire authority has yet determined to charge for such services, a number are now considering this. Assessment of this matter is currently being undertaken centrally by the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers’ Association. Members may wish therefore to defer any determination pending the outcome of this assessment, then to seek commonality of approach by all authorities through the Local Government Association.

- 12 Pending the advice of the Local Government Association, Members might wish to reaffirm that the Chief Fire Officer continues to levy a charge for those special services as he determines appropriate (eg environmental hazards where responsibility is clear).

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1 Agenda and Minutes: Shadow Combined Fire Authority, 18 December 1997.
- 2 Agenda and Minutes: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, 16 March 1998.

Contact Officer: Mike Clement-Green: (0118) 932 2215

**AGENDA ITEM 17 : IMPLICATIONS OF HEALTH AND SAFETY
IMPROVEMENT NOTICE: PROGRESS REPORT**

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 9 June 1998
Officers Contributing: Chief Fire Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members of the continued progress made by the Chief Fire Officer in implementing the plan agreed with the Health and Safety Executive to discharge the Improvement Notice issued to the Authority in January 1997.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to NOTE the report.

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF PROPOSED ACTION

The measures taken and proposed will be contained within the budget approved for 1998/99.

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 Members have previously been advised (as the Shadow Combined Fire Authority) of the Improvement Notice issued to the Authority by the Health and Safety Executive, and the formation of a Health and Safety Project Team to develop and implement a plan for its discharge.
- 2 The project has fallen behind schedule, partially due to some underestimation of the work necessary, but principally due to many of the elements of the plan being linked to the development of the brigade's budget for 1998/99 and the implementation of the revised management structure. Both of these issues were approved by the Shadow Authority at its meeting on 18 December 1997.
- 3 Following this approval, efforts have been and continue to be made to restore the project to schedule. However, some elements of the plan remain incomplete and it is therefore considered necessary for the Health and Safety Project Team to continue in place until at least September 1998. Budget provision for this was included in the brigade's budget for 1998/99.
- 4 Regular dialogue continues between the Health and Safety Project Team and the Health and Safety Executive who are satisfied with the measures being taken. Indeed, the Executive has written to the Chief Fire Officer to acknowledge the quality of the work being undertaken. (A copy of that letter has been circulated to Members as part

of the pack of background papers).

5 Progress against each element of the plan is detailed in the annex to this report.

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

1 Agenda and Minutes - Berkshire County Council Public Protection Urgency Sub Committee: 5 February 1997.

2 Agenda and Minutes - Berkshire County Council Public Protection Committee: 21 March 1997.

3 Agenda and Minutes - Berkshire County Council Public Protection Committee: 23 May 1997.

4 Agenda and Minutes - Fire Joint Committee: 17 September 1997

Contact Officer: Mike Clement-Green: (0118) 932 2215

HEALTH & SAFETY IMPROVEMENT NOTICE

OBJECTIVE	SCHEDULED COMPLETION	COMMENT
Accident Investigation	March 1998	Procedure implemented on schedule, management information system identified and invitation to tender imminent now finance available.
Operational Debrief	November 1997	Completed
Health & Safety Training	1999	Monthly training courses now underway for identified personnel, training due to be completed on schedule.
Risk Assessment	January 1998	Work proved to be more complex than expected. Documentation successfully piloted and due for imminent launch with appropriate training.
Risk Assessment, New Equipment	January 1998	Completed
Operational Risk Assessment	December 1998	Currently behind schedule but anticipated that completion will still be achieved on time.
Document Review	December 1999	Delayed by three months due to difficulties in filling vacancies. Personnel now in post and seeking to make up for lost time.
Health & Safety Information	January 1998	Completed
Health & Safety Committee	July 1997	Completed
Management Structure	March 1998	Completed
Roles & Responsibilities	March 1998	Completed
Audit	July 1998	On schedule subject to availability of suitable training courses.

OBJECTIVE	SCHEDULED COMPLETION	COMMENT
Health & Safety Policy	April 1998	Slight delay. Draft policy will be put to the September meeting of the Authority for consideration and adoption.
Occupational Health	April 1998	Completed
Training	September 1997	Completed
Standardised Training Materials	November 1997	Completed
Training for Trainers	August 1998	Currently behind schedule but anticipated that completion will still be achieved on time.

AGENDA ITEM 18 : CREWING LEVELS

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 9 June 1998
Officers Contributing: Chief Fire Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members of the crewing levels on wholetime fire stations.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to NOTE the report.

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The brigade's approved budget for 1998/99 is adequate to maintain the approved establishment for the brigade.

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 The brigade's authorised establishment for uniformed personnel, approved by both the Authority and the Home Office, is designed to provide a crew of 5 personnel to each wholetime-crewed pumping appliance (a crew of four for the second wholetime pump at Slough) and a crew of two personnel on designated special appliances on at least 75% of all shifts. This level is generally referred to as the confidence level.
- 2 At a meeting with Party spokespersons on 25 February 1998, officials of the Fire Brigades Union expressed concern that the confidence level was not being met; that is to say that appliances were riding with less than the optimum crewing levels referred to above in excess of 25% of all shifts.
- 3 Attached as the annex to this report is a summary of the number of rider personnel on duty on each shift over the period 19 January 1998 to 19 April 1998, a total of 182 shifts. (An update on the period since 19 April 1998 will be presented at the meeting - a full day by day breakdown has been copied to Members as a background paper.).
- 4 Members will note that up to 31 March 1998, 62 rider personnel were required to be on duty on each shift to achieve the optimum crewing level; from 1 April 1998, with the switch-crewing of the Chemical Incident Unit with a pumping appliance (authorised by the Authority to achieve a reduction of 12 posts), this figure is reduced to 60 rider personnel per shift. The annex to this report indicates that the optimum crewing level or higher has been achieved on only 55% of all shifts (thus falling short of the confidence level by 20%).

- 5 The Chief Fire Officer shares in the concerns regarding the apparent inability to achieve the recognised crewing level and in particular that this was not identified or made apparent at an earlier stage.
- 6 With regard to the latter, Members are advised that information systems to facilitate this were included in the Brigades IT strategy and previously approved by the County Council's Public Protection Committee. Unfortunately the inability to fund has prevented implementation.
- 7 It may also be worthy of note that, until the recent discussions, at no time has the matter been raised as a potential for concern with principal management via the recognised consultative processes, nor has there been any suggestion of public concern over the issue.
- 8 Members are advised of a number of factors which exacerbate non-achievement of the confidence level:
 - a The incidence of casual sickness is relatively high. However, measures have already been introduced to reduce this which are proving to be successful. Such measures include closer monitoring of sickness trends, staff welfare interviews on return to duty and the requirement to submit medical certification of illness on all occasions and referral to the brigade's contracted occupational health advisor in appropriate cases.
 - b Currently, 5 personnel are on long-term sick leave due to serious illness or injury. As the brigade is not funded to recruit above its authorised establishment, these positions are effectively lost to the brigade for the duration of the sick leave and any subsequent period of "light duty" during which the member of staff concerned cannot be utilised operationally. Individual cases are monitored closely in conjunction with the contracted occupational health advisor.
 - c The establishment of some necessary but long term projects have required personnel to be detached from their riding positions. Examples of these are elements of the health and safety project, the project to build and equip the new command and control centre and the development of competency based training systems. These projects either have concluded or will soon conclude, or have been established as part of the new structure for the brigade and are thus included in the approved establishment.
 - d Whilst the loss of uniformed personnel by resignation from the Service is small, a relatively high number of staff have transferred to other brigades either on promotion, or because they are unable to afford the relatively high cost of housing in Berkshire. Unlike retirement after completion of pensionable service, the Chief Fire Officer is unable to forecast such losses, or the loss of staff who are deemed by the contracted occupational health advisor no longer able to meet the exacting and necessary medical standards for operational personnel and who are thus retired on medical grounds. Funding does not permit the authorised establishment of the brigade to be exceeded to anticipate such losses. The replacement of such staff by newly recruited and

trained personnel is a lengthy process; in effect, it can take up to 18 months between the commencement of recruitment and the establishment of a "useful" firefighter on station.

- e Members will recall deferring an increase in the brigade's current training reserve as part of the 1998/99 budget setting process.
- 9 The Chief Fire Officer has put in place the following measures to seek an improvement in the confidence level to at least 75%:
- a The Deputy Chief Fire Officer has assumed personal responsibility for monitoring and seeking to maintain crewing levels;
 - b Watch (ie shift) Commanders are now required to forecast their anticipated crewing levels for the following tour of duty. These forecasts are circulated to all wholetime stations to enable temporary relocations of staff to be made to maximise the number of appliances crewed to the optimum level.
 - c Actual appliance crewing levels are notified at the start of each shift to the duty Brigade Support Officer to take account of any absences not anticipated previously (eg subsequent sick leave). Where this results in an under provision of staff being noted, any provision of resources above the optimum level at another station is temporarily relocated to restore the crewing levels.
 - d The newly appointed Operations Manager has been tasked to undertake a thorough review of the method of providing and monitoring crewing levels. This review will be undertaken in consultation with Station Commanders to ensure that current systems are refined appropriately.
 - e The appointment of staff to some specialist, non-riding positions has been deferred pending the recruitment of replacement staff.
 - f Although the confidence levels are monitored in this brigade for both pumping and special appliances, the primary concern of HM Inspectorate of Fire Services relates to pumping appliances only. The Chief Fire Officer will therefore introduce a policy to utilise the dedicated crews of the Rescue Support Vehicle at Newbury, the Hydraulic Platform/Operations Support Unit at Whitley Wood and the Hydraulic Platform/Rescue Support Vehicle at Slough to bolster the crews on pumping appliances to at least 75% confidence level. This will necessitate using these personnel to crew pumping appliances on shifts where there is a deficiency in the number of staff on duty to provide 5 personnel on pumping appliances (4 on the second pump at Slough), switch-crewing these special appliances with pumps as appropriate.
 - g Recruitment has commenced to bring the Brigade up to full establishment. There are currently 11 potential recruits on the employment waiting list who are deemed to be suitable for employment. Subject to satisfactory medical examination, these will commence basic training on 29th June 1998. The recruitment process to provide a future waiting list of suitable personnel to enable the Brigade establishment to be maintained in future has also

commenced.

- h. The Chief Fire Officer has recently received requests for transfer into Berkshire from qualified personnel currently serving with other Brigades. Arrangements are in hand to interview and appoint suitable candidates as soon as practicable.
- i. The problem identified in paragraph D8d above has been exacerbated by a relatively high proportion of staff being recruited from areas some distance from Berkshire seeking early transfer to Brigades closer to their 'home' area following initial training. To discourage this, the Chief Fire Officer intends to impose a clause into the contract of employment for all new wholetime firefighters to require them to repay training costs, on a sliding scale, should they be successful in obtaining a transfer to another Brigade (other than a promotion) within 5 years of the commencement of their employment with this Authority.
- j. Vacancies at junior officer level in specialist positions are being advertised nationally within the UK fire services. Subject to satisfactory applications being received, this will reduce internal promotions, thereby reducing the need to recruit untrained firefighters.

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Contact Officer: Mike Clement-Green: (0118) 932 2215

SUMMARY OF TOTAL RIDERS ON DUTY PER SHIFT

January:

No. of shifts monitored for month =	26	100%
No. of shifts at or above preferred level of crewing =	14	53.8%
No. of shifts below preferred level of crewing =	12	46.2%

February:

No. of shifts in months =	56	100%
No. of shifts at or above preferred level of crewing =	29	51.8%
No. of shifts below preferred level of crewing =	27	48.2%

March:

No. of shifts in months =	62	100%
No. of shifts at or above preferred level of crewing =	26	42%
No. of shifts below preferred level of crewing =	36	58%

April:

No. of shifts in months (to date of report)=	38	100%
No. of shifts at or above preferred level of crewing =	31	81.5%
No. of shifts below preferred level of crewing =	7	18.5%

Total (19 January - 19 April 1998)

Total overall no. of shifts:	182	100%
No. overall of shifts at or above preferred level of crewing:	101	55%
No. overall of shifts below preferred level of crewing:	81	45%

AGENDA ITEM 19 : FIRE SERVICE PENSION SCHEME - REVIEW

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 9 June 1998
Officer Contributing: Director of Human Resources

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members of the proposals arising from the review of the Fire Service Pension Scheme.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to **RESOLVE:** That the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the party spokesmen, be authorised to respond to the proposals arising from the review of the Fire Service Pension Scheme.

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF PROPOSED ACTION

The financial implications will be dependent on the outcome of the review. The purpose is to reduce the burden on employers of the Fire Service Pension Scheme. It is likely to be many years before any real savings are realised and there is the very real prospect of increased costs in the short to medium term.

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 Members will be aware that a review of the Fire Service Pension Scheme was announced in October 1993, but although work commenced in 1994, the report was not published prior to the General Election on 1 May 1997. Since then further consideration has been given by Ministers to the issues raised by the review and a consultation document issued on which views are sought by 31 July 1998. In addition, the Local Government Association has sought the views of member authorities to enable it to respond by this deadline. The LGA is asking for responses during June.
- 2 Except for certain options to improve the management of ill-health retirement, the proposals focus on a revised scheme to apply to new entrants only. As a whole, the options would bring fire service pensions of the future more into line with other public sector schemes. They would still remain among the most generous, and expensive, in the public sector.
- 3 The officers are currently examining the proposals and will liaise with the three party spokesmen over a suitable response by the deadline, subject to the Authority authorising them to proceed in this way.

- 4 A copy of the Executive Summary of the consultation document has been sent to each Member of the Authority for their information.

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

Fire Service Pension Scheme - Review: Consultation Document

Contact Officer: Geoff Hawkins, Human Resources: (0118) 932 2227

AGENDA ITEM 20 : FIRE '98 CONFERENCE

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 9 June 1998
Officer Contributing: Clerk & Monitoring Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To determine Member attendance at the Fire '98 Conference.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to consider the matter and RESOLVE accordingly.

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF PROPOSED ACTION

The cost of attendance will be met by the Authority.

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 The Fire '98 Conference is to be held from 7-10 September 1998 in Glasgow. Details of the conference programme are available from the Chief Fire Officer.
- 2 In the past, it was customary for the County Council to appoint Members of the former Public Protection Committee to accompany the Chief Fire Officer to the event. The Authority is accordingly invited to determine whether it would wish to be represented at this year's event.

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Contact Officer: Derek Morgan, Committee Administrator: (0118) 932 2288

AGENDA ITEM 21 : COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

To: **Royal Berkshire Fire Authority**
Date: **9 June 1998**
Officers Contributing: **Chief Fire Officer**

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members of a commercial partnership with the private sector for 1998/99.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to NOTE the report.

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 1 A partnership which provides additional funds to the Brigade has been achieved for 1998/99. This funding is additional to the Brigade's approved budget and is to be used exclusively to enhance community safety initiatives.**
- 2 There are thus no financial implications arising from this report.**

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 At its meeting on 5 February 1997 the County Council's Public Protection Urgency Sub-Committee authorised the Chief Fire Officer to seek partnerships with the private sector to develop and enhance community safety initiatives. Numerous companies have since been approached and a variety of avenues explored.**
- 2 A legal agreement has now been signed with Yellow Pages, the effect of which is to provide a partnership to achieve specific community safety initiatives, primarily in the Reading area.**
- 3 This partnership is initially for one financial year. However, the commercial partners have indicated that if the initiatives prove to be successful in raising their profile as a community based organisation, it is likely that the partnership will be extended into future years. Additionally, the Chief Fire Officer is optimistic that if this initiative is given an appropriate profile, additional partnerships may be forthcoming from other commercial organisations to enable additional community safety teams to be developed to pursue similar initiatives in other communities within the Authority's area.**
- 4 The funding provided through the partnership will be used to recruit and train a small team of community safety assistants to pursue these specific objectives within the Reading area. This team will operate within the Service Delivery Directorate,**

reporting to the Community Fire Safety Officers for the brigade's Reading (West) and Reading (East) areas. The team will comprise a mixture of uniformed and non-uniformed staff with appropriate skills. Measures are in hand to recruit uniformed staff from within the existing workforce (who can be re-absorbed into the Brigade establishment through natural wastage if further partnership is not achieved) and non-uniformed staff externally on fixed-term contracts for the duration of the partnership.

- 5 The partnership will also provide media exposure and the production and distribution of all necessary supporting materials (leaflets etc). Media exposure will be purchased through Yellow Pages who already have arrangements in place to achieve best value for money, together with appropriate marketing expertise. The intended approach emphasises partnership, with all materials jointly "badged" by the brigade and Yellow Pages, together with an appropriate slogan to be agreed by both parties (for example: "Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and Yellow Pages working in partnership for a safer community"). The agreement maintains the Chief Fire Officer's right to approve all material as being suitable.
- 6 The specific initiatives agreed are detailed in the annex to this report. All comply with the thrust of the Government's Community Safety Task Force report, "Safe as Houses".

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

Agenda & Minutes - County Council Public Protection Urgency Sub Committee: 5 February 1997

Contact Officer: Mike Clement-Green: (0118) 932 2215

“SAFETY DETECTIVES” SCHEME

Target: Children between 5-11 (to be confirmed)

Develop from Avonsafe/Frenchay NHS Trust “safety detectives” club home safety checklist. In addition a membership certificate.

Ultimate Target: 10,000 Berkshire households to have undertaken a home safety check.

Delivery: Children given “safety detectives” checklist following some form of safety education. Children encouraged to take home checklist and complete home safety check with rest of family. On return of completed checklist (signed by adult confirming check) the child is sent/given a certificate and/or badge.

Safety education can be through community safety personnel or in collaboration with other suitable partners eg Schools, LTA, Safety Street.

Desirable Outcome: Reduced loss of life and property from fire (Strategic Targets i and ii).
Reduced level of accidents in and around the home.

Additional Note: PR opportunity for sponsor on checklists and certificates.

Media: Possibilities for launching scheme in each Unitary area.

“HOME FIRE SAFETY THROUGH OTHERS”

- Target:** Home Care Assistants, District Nurses, Health Visitors, Midwives, etc who visit families in the home.
- Develop:** “Home Safe” pack that informs home visitors of the common fire hazards in the home, prevention and fire plans. Include a “Home Fire Safety” check list aide memoire.
- Ultimate Target:** The families these workers visit to be given safety advice by worker, supported by leaving aide memoire.
- Delivery:** Community safety personnel to identify groups of home visitors, eg health visitors, midwives, etc and provide short training seminars. Content of seminars to be common fire hazards in the home, fire prevention in the home, fire survival and plans. Home fire safety check lists etc to be distributed at end of session.
- Desirable Outcome:** Reduced loss of life and property through fire (Strategic target I and ii).
- Additional Note:** PR opportunity for sponsor on end of session hand-outs, check lists, aide memoires.
- Media:** No media opportunity.

“WATCHING OVER BUSINESSES”

Target: The existing Business Watch schemes across Berkshire (approx 6)

Investigate opportunity of sitting in on Business Watch committees with a view to offering support where appropriate. Develop fire and arson prevention talk suitable for an audience of industrial and commercial businesses. Develop static display and hand-outs that could be used alone or in support of talk.

Ultimate Target: Increased awareness of arson as a threat to Business Watch members encouraging fire and arson prevention measures to be taken.

Delivery: Community safety personnel or, where more appropriate, local personnel to seek opportunity to sit on Business Watch committees. From this position, or through other liaison, offer wider support in one-off sessions.

Desirable Outcome: Reduced loss of life and property through fire (Strategic Targets I and ii).
Reduced unwanted AFA calls (strategic Target iii)
Reduced level of arson (Strategic Target iv)

Additional Note: Good opportunity of PR for sponsor.

Media: Little or no media opportunity.

**“PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT”
POSTERS & LEAFLETS CAMPAIGN**

Target: Estate Agents
Building Societies
Banks

Develop poster/s around “Protect your Investment” linking installation and maintenance of smoke detection in the home with property investment.

Develop leaflet/flyer based on poster.

Ultimate Target: Existing and proposed home owners and occupiers to be given encouragement to protect their investment.

Delivery: Draw up lists of potential sites, with help from Yellow Pages, consisting of Estate Agents, Banks, and Building Societies.

Subject to potential numbers and density of their location, consider either:

- a Send poster/s to manager with covering letter asking that posters are put up in prominent positions and leaflets distributed with property details and/or
- b Delivered by hand by Community Safety personnel and requesting manager to assist as outlined in (a).

Desirable Outcome: Reduce loss of life and property from fire. (strategic Targets i and ii)

Additional Notes: Possible additional circulation “house to house” delivery of leaflets by fire crews around new private housing estates etc.

Media: Press releases. Facilitate TV coverage of launch.

COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGIC TARGETS

- i Reduce preventable fire deaths by 50% within 5 years.
[based on deaths per million population - 1996: 12 deaths = 15 ppm]
- ii Reduce level of casualties from fire by 25% within 5 years.
[based on 1996 - 133 casualties]
- iii Reduce level of unwanted fire calls from AFA and hoaxes within 2 years by 5% and 10% respectively.
[1996 unwanted AFA's = 3532, hoax calls = 1116]
- iv Reduce arson related incidents by 10% within 5 years in proportion to fires attended.
[1996 primary fires - 564 = 25%, secondary - 1432 = 66%, average 45% of all fires]
- v Reduce arson re-offending to less than 25% within 10 years of juveniles apprehended and charged with arson.
[No definitive figures available but estimated to be currently over 40%]

Framework

- 3 The overall framework has the following elements:
- Every council will be required to introduce its own code of conduct for councillors, based on a national model.
 - (N.B.: There is an existing non-statutory code of conduct which will be revised, expanded upon and made obligatory.)
 - There will be arrangements for the investigation of all allegations of malpractice and wrong doing.
 - For all serious allegations, the investigation will be independent.
 - All investigations will be as rapid and thorough as fairness to individuals allows, and findings will be quickly acted upon.
 - Every council will be required to adopt a code of conduct for its staff who will be required to observe it as part of their normal conditions of service.

Code of Conduct for Councillors

- 4 The Government proposes two new statutory requirements:
- Each council must adopt a code of conduct for its members.
 - All members of a council must observe that council's code.
- 5 The code will include core principles on the following:
- Community Leadership.
 - Duty to uphold the Law.
 - Constituency - acting in the interest of the whole community.
 - Selflessness - acting solely in the public interest.
 - Integrity and Propriety.
 - Hospitality.
 - Objectivity in Decision-Making.
 - Accountability.
 - Openness.

- Proper regard to confidentiality.
 - Stewardship of Public Funds.
 - Participation - a presumption in favour of a member participating unless there is good reason to the contrary.
 - Declarations of personal and private interest.
 - Respect for the role of officers and employees.
- 6 The Government intends to prepare a Model Code after consultation with the Local Government Association, the Audit Commission, and the Ombudsman, embracing the above core areas with particular emphasis on:
- How councillors discharge their representative function.
 - Councillors' conduct in relation to pecuniary and other interests.
 - The relationship between councillors and officers.
 - Rules regarding expenses/allowances and the use of council facilities.

Members' Interests

- 7 It is proposed that each council must set up and maintain a public register of members' interests: "the primary purpose of which is to provide information on any pecuniary interest or other material benefit which a councillor receives which might reasonably be thought by others to influence his or her work as a councillor". Eleven categories of registrable interest are proposed.
- Directorships.
 - Employment.
 - Clients, when services provided to the client arise out of or are related in any manner to membership of the council.
 - Financial sponsorship as a candidate for election and as a member.
 - Gifts above a specified value.
 - Costs of overseas visits relating to membership of the council where costs have not been borne wholly by the member.
 - Land and property of substantial value within the area of the council.
 - Any business in which the member has a significant interest with which the council has a contractual or tendering relationship.

- Positions in societies, clubs etc where the interest of such bodies may be affected by the actions of the council.
 - Beneficial interest in shareholdings above a particular value.
 - Other relevant information falling within the definition of the purpose of the register, eg membership of organisations such as the freemasons.
- 8 Subject to any dispensation, it is proposed that members should not participate in the discussion or consideration of matters in which:
- They or their spouse have a direct pecuniary interest.
 - They might appear to be at risk of bias by putting private interest above the public interest.
 - They might be seen to be using their position as a member to secure preferential treatment or advantage for themselves or for those with whom they are connected.

Failure to declare a direct pecuniary interest would continue to be a criminal offence.

- 9 The Government envisages a continuation of dispensation in particular circumstances but is undecided whether this should be given locally (ie through a council's own code) or externally through an independent body.

Enforcement

- 10 The Government believes that there should be a statutory requirement that all allegations of councillors' failure to observe the code should be investigated and appropriate action taken when allegations are upheld. The arrangements envisaged include a standards committee for each council and an external independent standards board (probably operating through regional panels). The latter would be able to impose penalties ranging from public censure to disqualification from office. There would be the right of appeal to a national panel of the Board.
- 11 The Nolan Committee recommended the abolition of an auditor's power of surcharge and the introduction of a new statutory offence of misuse of public office. The latter would carry the full range of penalties under criminal law and would apply to situations not covered by surcharge, which tends to focus on financial loss or unlawful expenditure. The proposed offence would apply to members and officers. It seems from the consultation paper that the Government is minded to accept this recommendation.
- 12 The Government believes that the role of the Ombudsman would need to be redefined to avoid duplication with the proposed disciplinary arrangements.

Conduct of Staff

- 13 There would be a statutory duty on each council to adopt:
- A code of conduct for its staff who would be required to observe the code as part of their normal conditions of service.
 - A protocol regulating relationships between members and officers.
 - Arrangements for whistleblowing, to which staff of organisations contracting with the council should also have access.

With regard to the proposed code. There would be a model code to guide councils. Since the code would be enshrined in staff's conditions of service, enforcement of it would be through the normal staff disciplinary arrangements and employment law.

- 14 The consultation paper foresees a more pro-active role for monitoring officers. The paper recommends that the post of Monitoring Officer be at chief officer level and should be separate from the post of Head of Paid Service. The paper suggests that the law regarding dismissal procedures currently applicable to the Head of Paid Service should also apply to the Monitoring Officer and to the Chief Financial Officer as a measure of protection from political "interference".
- 15 The Government intends to review the criteria used for designating posts as politically restricted with a view to harmonisation across the public sector.
- 16 The proposal regarding arrangements for whistleblowing emanates from the Nolan Committee. The Government intends to discuss with the Local Government Association how the recommendation might be implemented.

Suggested Response

- 17 Subject to any views which the Members may wish to add or amend, the Authority may wish to accept the following response to the consultation paper:

"In the context of the current national debate on standards in public life, there is a need to clarify the law relating to members' conduct which is derived from various pieces of legislation, and advice from the Audit Commission and the Ombudsman. Bringing all of this together should achieve greater clarity and understanding, for the benefit of members and officers, and increase public confidence in the service.

Since each council will be required to adopt its own code for councillors, members will find themselves subject to two separate codes, three in the case of a member who also serves on a police authority. Although this may at first seem like unnecessary duplication, there are considerations which are unique to a fire authority which need to be included in its own code. For example, should a member of the fire authority be debarred from participating in consideration of contracts with a constituent authority. Any code needs to emphasise members' overriding obligation to act in the best interests of the fire authority when engaged in its business, notwithstanding at times that there may be conflict between the interests of the Fire Authority and their appointing unitary councils.

The enforcement and disciplinary arrangements for members set out in the consultation paper appear to be based on the Government's wish for greater openness and accountability. Justice must not only be done, but be seen to be done. The danger of increased bureaucracy should, however, be recognised and possible duplication with the Ombudsman must be avoided. There must also be a will to ensure that arrangements operate speedily without compromising effectiveness or natural justice. There may be some value in laying down a framework timescale within which matters should be investigated and resolved.

The former County Council had itself adopted a Code of Employee Conduct applicable to all staff which continues to apply. Uniformed staff are also subject to the Brigade's own standing orders and strict codes of discipline. Nevertheless, the measures proposed on the conduct of staff are supported, for enhancing public confidence, but a written protocol on member/officer relationships will never be a substitute for mutual trust and respect."

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

DETR Consultation Paper - "Modernising Local Government: A New Ethical Framework"

Contact Officer: Clive Williams, Clerk & Monitoring Officer: (0118) 932 2283

AGENDA ITEM 23 : FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE - FIRES AND INCIDENTS OF INTEREST

To: Combined Fire Authority
Date: 9 June 1998
Officers Contributing: Chief Fire Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members of fires, incidents and activities of interest since April 1 1998.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to NOTE the report.

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF PROPOSED ACTION

There are no financial implications.

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Brief details of fires and other incidents of importance or interest are set out in the appendix to this report.

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Contact Officer: David Harper, Chief Fire Officer: (0118) 932 2225

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

1 April 1998 to 31 May 1998

FIRES AND INCIDENTS OF INTEREST

2 April 16.48 Worton Grange, Reading

Firefighters from Whitley Wood were called to a small fire in an electricity sub-station at the back of Courage Brewery. The fire, which was quickly brought under control, had been caused by an explosion, which killed an engineer.

3 April 17.25 Wolsely Street, Coley, Reading

A dog stuck under the stairs was freed by a crew from Caversham Road. Mitzi had fallen through a gap and was trapped for more than three hours in the building's foundations. Using tools from the hearth kit, the crew dismantled the stairs, rescued the dog, and then put the stairs back together again.

11 April 09.36 Fenwick Stores, King Edward Court, Peascod Street, Windsor

A high-flying swan was rescued from netting by Windsor firefighters, who had just the man for the job - Leading Firefighter Bob Swann. The crew carried ladders through the store to enable a rescue officer from the Eton-based charity Swan Lifeline to snare the swan with a noose.

13 April 17.28 J Mould, Commercial Road, Reading

The foam tanker was called in to assist crews from Whitley Wood, Caversham Road and Dee Road, who were faced with an explosive situation when they were called to a recycling plant. A blaze, which is thought to have been started deliberately, in a mobile office spread to five container units. One held a 4ft high cylinder of oxyacetylene, which ripped a hole in the side of its steel holding structure. Several smaller explosions occurred and a container of engine oil tanks also caught alight. Firefighters were on the scene until just before 11pm.

23 April 18.47 Nugent House, Vastern Road, Reading

A cyclist who was catapulted into the Thames when his wheels got caught in the tram lines by Nugent House was rescued before crews from Caversham Road and Dee Road arrived at the scene. However, his expensive bike was rescued by firefighters from Dee Road with a grappling hook.

3 May 02.10 Silco Drive, Maidenhead

Around 14,000 wooden pallets were engulfed by fire at a company yard. Firefighters from Maidenhead, Slough, Reading, Cookham and Windsor were called to the scene and the incident control unit co-ordinated the operation, which lasted for five hours. Four pumps were used to relay water to the scene from a hydrant in Grenfell Road, two were used to fight the fire and a further two appliances assisted when required. The hydraulic platform was also in use to fight the flames from above.

3 May 19.21 Passey Brakers Yard, Turnpike Road, Newbury

Crews from Newbury and Lambourn fought a fire at the yard, which destroyed around 50 cars. It took almost an hour for firefighters using breathing apparatus to bring the blaze, which generated columns of thick black smoke, under control.

4 May 00.03 Smiths Lane, Dedworth, Windsor

Windsor firefighters were called out when a member of the public discovered four five litre drums of phosphoric acid in the street - two of which were leaking. In a mopping up operation that took three hours, firefighters wearing gas suits and breathing apparatus put down absorbent granules. The residue was washed away on the advice of the Environment Agency. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead collected the drums for disposal.

5 May 05.38 Buckingham Avenue Trading Estate, Slough

Around 30 firefighters assisted in an operation to contain poisonous gas, which had evaporated from a vat of trichloroethylene, which cleans grease from tools. Crews from Slough and Langley, Windsor and Maidenhead were joined by the Chemical Incident Unit in an operation lasting four hours. The tank had overheated creating fumes. Firefighters allowed the tank to cool down and ventilated the building.

7 May 18.11 Tanners Lane, Chalkhouse Green

Crews from Caversham Road, Wokingham Road and Henley were called to a burning bungalow. Two people received treatment for smoke inhalation.

13 May 17.14 St Ledger Court, Digby Road, Newbury

An elderly man died in a fire in his home, which was probably caused by a carelessly discarded cigarette. Crews from Newbury using breathing apparatus dragged the man out but were unable to revive him.

16 May 02.15 River Thames, Richfield Avenue, Reading

The body of a young man was pulled from the river by firefighters using the brigade's rescue boat, which is based at Caversham Road. Firefighters and police divers spent 40 minutes looking for the man at Caversham Bridge, before discovering his body about 10 yards downstream.

19 May 01.43 Southcote Sub Station, Burghfield Road, Reading

Fire crews from Dee Road, Caversham Road and Whitley Wood had to wait for Southern Electric to isolate a 33,000 volt supply entering the sub-station before they could tackle a fire, which destroyed 75 per cent of the building. The fire was brought under control just after 5.30am by firefighters using foam and breathing. Police are investigating the cause.

19 May 19.02 Furnival Avenue, Slough

A crew from Slough made the roof of the home of a senior citizen safe after a four-foot block of ice fell through it. It is thought the ice may have fallen off a passing aircraft.

19 May 23.43 Exel Logistics, Lakeside Industrial Estate, Colnbrook

Around 180kg of ammonia which had leaked out of faulty pipes was allowed to vent naturally at Exel Logistics. The Chemical Incident Unit joined crews from Slough and Langley to deal with the spill.

20 May 13.33 Gibbons Factory, Oxford Road, Wokingham

It took around 40 firefighters more than an hour to tackle a blaze, which destroyed half of the furniture factory. Crews from Wokingham, Bracknell, Ascot, Crowthorne, Whitley Wood and Dee Road tackled the flames which had burst through the roof using breathing apparatus. Smoke billowed over the nearby railway track throughout the incident. A member of the public was taken to hospital.

27 May 03.13 St George's Crescent, Cippenham, Slough

A mother and her baby were rescued from a blaze at their home, which is thought to have been started deliberately. The fire control operator, who took the call, stayed on line to the distressed mother until fire crews from Slough arrived at the scene. At first there were no visible signs of fire but on going to the back of the house, firefighters saw smoke coming from a window. The baby was rescued by two firefighters who climbed onto a flat roof. The fire was quickly extinguished and the mother helped out the house via the stairs.

PUBLIC REACTION TO THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**23 March 1998 Red Cross visit to Control**

"..thank you for our recent visit. It was enjoyed by all and everyone was impressed by the detail that is available on your computers when an incident occurs."

Richard Dolton, Group Leader, Newbury Red Cross

24 March 1998 Visit to Bracknell Fire Station

"..thank you for welcoming us to the Fire Station. The children did enjoy their visit and benefited a great deal from it."

Colette Thomas, Head of Pre-School, Meadowbrook Montessori Farm School, Bracknell

16 April 1998 Fire at Dawson Close, Windsor

"..thank you for coming to the rescue of my burnt cake on Good Friday. You were all so kind and helpful to me, and did not tell me off."

Mrs Lillian Norwell, Dawson Close, Windsor

17 April 1998 Fire at Elva Lodge Hotel. Castle Hill, Maidenhead

"..Many thanks to Blue Watch from Maidenhead who, at 1.30am on March 24, prevented a serious blaze taking hold in the bar and restaurant. I must reiterate my thanks for the professional action of your men putting their lives at risk for us."

P R L Lion, Elva Lodge Hotel

24 April 1998 Visit to the Training Centre

"...I know I speak for everyone who attended when I say that you put in maximum effort to enable us the best insight into the Fire Service. There is also a special thank you for your understanding towards those people in the group who did not wish to participate in all the exercises."

Emma Lovejoy, Reading College and School of Arts & Design

11 May 1998 Visit by the Fire Brigade Society

“..on behalf of all the members of the society who attended the visit to the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, please pass on our sincere thanks to all those who made it such a success. Everybody we met over the weekend was a credit to the service.”

Nigel Crompton, Assistant General Secretary, The Fire Brigade Society

17 April 1998 Fire at Elva Lodge Hotel, Maidenhead

“..Many thanks to Blue Watch who prevented a serious blaze taking hold in the bar and restaurant. I must reiterate my thanks for the professional action of your men putting their lives at risk for us.”

P R L Lion, Elva Lodge Hotel

4 May 1998 Car wash in aid of Megan Kirby Autistic Appeal

“..I am writing to express my most sincere heartfelt thanks to all the lads at Newbury for your help for the appeal. You have all put in a lot of time, effort and hard work to ensure that you raise as much money as possible for us to send Megan to Massachusetts.”

David Strong, Kirton Close, Reading

INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Sub Officer Mick Fox (Dee Road, Tilehurst) was a recipient of the award for outstanding service and achievements on behalf of Berkshire County Council. He was presented with his award at the final meeting of the county council on 31 March 1998.

Station Officer Dave Phillips (Dee Road, Tilehurst) taught in Malawi for two weeks in May, giving local firefighters practical instruction in firefighting and rescue techniques used in the UK. He was greeted by a Government Minister on arrival - and has been asked to go back again in six months time. Stn O Phillips shared his skills as part of a scheme run by the Institution of Fire Engineers - the service's professional body - and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum to give expert advice overseas. As a result of recommendations given on the course, a committee of chief fire officers has been set up to advise the ministry on the needs of the fire service. He was in Malawi with a colleague from the Devon Fire Service to give practical instruction in all aspects of training, drills, operational procedures, pre-planning, command and control of incidents, fire safety, management techniques and to outline new developments. The pair will now be debriefing members of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum in London on June 23.

Leading Firefighter Julian Eggleton (Mortimer) represented the Great Britain Fire Service clay pigeon shooting team at the World Championships in Durban, South Africa.

CHARITY EVENTS

Car Washes

Newbury raised £1,500 for the Megan Kirby Autistic Appeal; Langley raised £577 for the Fire Service National Benevolent Fund, and Windsor raised £275 for the Crossroads charity, which provides support for carers.

Sub Officer Mike Fulwell (Caversham House) raised £1,200 for Mencap by completing the London Marathon in a full-set of breathing apparatus. It took him just under six hours a considerable feat of endurance. He also took part in the Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell Half Marathons. In recognition of his efforts he has been awarded with the Chief's Award, which is presented to the person making the largest contribution to the Brigade's Sports & Athletic Club.

AGENDA ITEM 24 : EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 9 June 1998
Officer Contributing: Clerk & Monitoring Officer

The Authority is Invited to **RESOLVE:** 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
25	Part II Minutes - 27 April 1998	1 & 8
26	Urgency Committee - Part II Minutes: 27 April & 19 May 1998	8, 9 & 11
27	Community Safety Partnership - Funding Arrangements	9

Note:

- 1 *The Authority is committed to open government and, whenever possible, meetings are open to the press and public. However, on occasions, it is necessary for the consideration of some reports to be undertaken in private. This is called "Part II" of the meeting.*
- 2 *The item above on the agenda has, therefore, been put into Part II. Information on why this issue has been placed in Part II is available from Derek Morgan on (0118) 932 2288, A part I summary of the action taken will be available in the minutes of the meeting.*