

## MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

Held on Wednesday 9 December 2009

Council Chamber, Reading Borough Council, Civic Centre,  
Reading, Berkshire, RG1 7TD



**Those present:** Councillor Dr Paul Bryant (*Chairman*) Councillor Owen Jeffery  
Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson Councillor Peter Jones  
Councillor Phillip Bicknell Councillor Iain McCracken  
Councillor Andrew Bradley Councillor Mrs Kathy Newbound  
Councillor Mrs Prue Bray Councillor Mohammed Rasib  
Councillor Jeff Brooks Councillor Angus Ross  
Councillor Colin Dudley Councillor Alan Ward (*part meeting*)  
Councillor Adrian Edwards Councillor Miss Emma Webster  
Councillor Paul Gittings (*part meeting*) Councillor Sean Wright  
Councillor Chris Harris Councillor Raja Zarait  
Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliar-Symons

**In Attendance:** Olaf Baars (Deputy Chief Fire Officer)  
Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer)  
Mr Jonathan Taylor (Independent Member, Standards Committee)  
Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)  
Caroline Redzikowska (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)  
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)  
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)  
David Wallace (Director of Human Resources)

**Observers:** Officers, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service  
Representative Bodies  
Members of the public

### 48. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Chris Bowring, Councillor John Lenton and Councillor Fred Pugh.

### 49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Declarations of Interest were made by Members:

- a) Councillor Angus Ross declared a Personal non Prejudicial Interest as the 2009/10 Fire Authority's representative and Board Member on the South East Fire and Rescue Service Control Centre Ltd (SEFRCCCL) in respect to Agenda Item 17 (South East Fire and Rescue Service Control Centre Ltd).
- b) Councillor Mrs Kathy Newbound declared a Personal non Prejudicial Interest as a Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Councillor in respect to Agenda Item 15 (Sustainable Communities Act 2007).
- c) Councillor Phillip Bicknell declared a Personal non Prejudicial Interest as a Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Councillor in respect to Agenda Item 15 (Sustainable Communities Act 2007).

### Action

- d) Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson declared a Personal non Prejudicial Interest as a Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Councillor in respect to Agenda Item 15 (Sustainable Communities Act 2007).

No further Declarations of Interest were made.

## **50. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2009**

### **Resolved:**

- a) That the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2009 be Approved for signing by the Chairman.

The Chairman noted that the actions from the last meeting had been discharged.

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) advised that he had not yet received any suggestions from Members that might enable the further exploration of attendance in schools by a Senior Officer to promote career awareness, particular in respect to gender equality within the Fire Service (*Minute 35 refers*). He stated that he would be providing a progress report to the Fire Authority at its next meeting in February 2010.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that an appointment had been made to the Community Safety vacancy (*Minute 26 refers*), but that this was subject to Criminal Records Bureau checks.

## **51. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDERS 19 AND 25**

There were no submissions from members of the public under the provisions of the Fire Authority's Rules of Procedure.

## **52. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman reported that he had attended the following events:

- The Firefighters' Memorial Service in London which had been well attended.
- The Newbury Remembrance Service, as a representative of the Fire Service.
- The recent Local Government Association Fire Forum.
- A Career Awareness Day held in Wokingham, attended also by Councillor Angus Ross, which had been well attended and a successful event.
- The last meeting of the Regional Management Board.

The Chairman conveyed his congratulations to the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's Extrication Team who had again taken first place in the 2009 World Rescue Challenge competition held in Hamburg. The Fire Authority also extended its congratulations to the Team on their achievement.

The Chairman advised, on behalf of Councillor John Lenton, how grateful Wraysbury Parish Council was to Andy Mancey (Area Manager, Response) who would be presenting a report on 21 December 2009 at the Parish Council meeting concerning the investigations into a recent fire in Wraysbury. Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson, on behalf of Councillor John Lenton, conveyed his appreciation to those Officers who have, and would, be attending the Parish Council's meetings on this issue.

### **53. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30**

There were no Questions received from the Fire Authority Members under Standing Order 30.

### **54. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44**

There were no submissions of Notices of Motion received under the provisions of the Fire Authority's Rules of Procedure.

### **55. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES**

#### **Resolved:**

- a) That it be noted that no Recommendations had been received from the Fire Authority Committees since 24 September 2009.

### **56. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE**

#### **Resolved:**

- a) That it be noted that there had been no reports referred by the Audit and Performance Review Committee.

### **57. 2009/10 BUDGET MONITORING**

The Fire Authority was advised of the revenue and capital expenditure against budgets up to the end of October 2009. The Authority Treasurer advised that the referred vacancies in his report had now been recruited to.

#### **Resolved:**

- a) That the Budget Monitoring report be Noted.

### **58. PROPOSAL FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF PRIVATE MEDICAL INSURANCE**

The Fire Authority considered the options presented in respect to the feasibility of introducing Private Medical Insurance (PMI) to Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS), the presented report outlining an overview of schemes, business need, and best practice as well as comparative initiatives undertaken by other Fire and Rescue Services.

The Director of Human Resources (DHR) apologised for a spelling error on page 21, first paragraph, that being "Woking Borough Council" which should have read "Wokingham Borough Council".

Councillor Jeff Brooks, whilst supportive of the Director of Human Resources' recommendation that further exploration of a cash-plan be developed, asked that any potential associated administrative costs to the Fire Authority in running such a scheme be identified.

Councillor Paul Gittings, on behalf of the Labour Group, felt that there as no justification in expending over £500k to fund the introduction of Private Medical Insurance as this money could be better utilised elsewhere within the Service.

Councillor Mrs Prue Bray recognised that, whilst considering the financial implications of such a scheme, the welfare of staff must also be taken into consideration.

Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliar-Symons **Moved** that, before the Fire Authority's future policy regarding Private Medical Insurance be determined, an appended table to the presented report should be presented to the next meeting in

February 2010 detailing the costs of different types of insurance totalled up against how much the Fire Authority might save against sickness absenteeism for the last two years. The Chairman **Moved** that this Motion be amended to include details of any potential associated administrative costs that might be incurred in running such a scheme. Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliar-Symons **agreed**. The amended Motion was seconded by the Vice-Chairman, and on being put to the vote, was carried, with no votes against.

Councillor Jeff Brooks stated that a budget had not been allocated in respect to the 2010/11 budget round considerations for the provision of Private Medical Insurance. The Chairman stated that if such a scheme was introduced, this might need to be deferred to the following year.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the Fire Authority's future policy regarding Private Medical Insurance be further determined at its next meeting in February 2010 after due consideration of an appended table to the presented report detailing the costs of different types of insurance totalled up against how much the Fire Authority might save against sickness absenteeism for the last two years, and any potential associated administrative costs that might be incurred in running such a scheme.

**DHR**  
Agenda  
17.02.10

**59. WOKINGHAM FIRE STATION PROGRESS REPORT**

The Fire Authority was updated on the progress toward the Wokingham Fire Station Project.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) made available to Members an indicative illustration of the plans for the site (*copy available from the Committee Manager*) as prepared by Babcock Infrastructure Services.

Councillor Miss Emma Webster declared a Personal non Prejudicial Interest as she was currently working on a project with Babcock Infrastructure Services, although she was not directly involved with the Wokingham Fire Station Project.

Councillor Adrian Edwards declared a Personal non Prejudicial Interest as his son is a Health and Safety Adviser employed by Babcock Infrastructure Services.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that the planning application was scheduled to be heard on 6 January 2010, however Councillor Angus Ross believed that this might not be heard until 3 February 2010.

Councillor Angus Ross **Moved** that the Fire Authority approves the installation of sprinklers into the new build, and this was seconded by Councillor Mrs Prue Bray. On being put to the vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

Councillor Jeff Brooks felt somewhat disappointed that, despite the feasibility study conducted in 2008, additional build costs of approximately £394,138 were now required to accommodate the construction of the new fire station, and he felt that the original Project estimated costs should be challenged. The Chairman reminded Members that the costs were subject to tender. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer stated that the feasibility study had been prepared by a professional property adviser who had now been replaced by Babcocks Infrastructure Services, and that the specifics of the study would be examined in more detail. He stated that the plans for the site could be adjusted to help reduce costs, however this could realise a revised planning application being submitted, the agreed fire station not being built, and could result in a delay of

around six months to the planning submission process. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Strategic Asset Management Committee would be considering the detailed proposals in respect to the planning application at its meeting in January 2010, and that a further report would be presented to the Fire Authority in due course. Councillor Jeff Brooks felt that the Management Committee should also consider the Project.

Councillor Jeff Brooks, whilst acknowledging the good progress made to date, felt that the costs presented in the report indicated to prospective tenderers the costs of the new build, and he **Moved** that a cap be put on the total spend for the Project of £1.3million. He subsequently **withdrew this Motion**.

In response to Councillor Paul Gittings, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the intention was to construct the new fire station to the best environmental standard under the required standards and those identified within the recently launched Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) for Fire Service buildings, however this might impact on the costs for the Project. Councillor Paul Gittings felt that a breakdown of environmental options available should be presented to the Strategic Asset Management Committee. Councillor Angus Ross believed that the Fire Authority not only had a responsibility for ensuring the most appropriate use of resources in terms of new build costs, but that it must also consider life costs within its overall considerations.

Councillor Paul Gittings, the Vice-Chairman and Councillor Ward all felt that the costs identified prior to the tender stage should be exempt information and presented in Part 2 of the meeting.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the report be Noted.
- b) That the installation of sprinklers into the new build on the Wokingham Fire Station site be approved.
- c) That the Strategic Asset Management Committee (SAMC) should continue to monitor the development and implementation of the detailed proposals for the Wokingham Fire Station site, and to advise the Management Committee and Fire Authority as appropriate. **SAMC**
- d) That Officers should present more detail in respect to the capital budget for this Project for subsequent consideration by the 2010/11 Budget Working Party at its next meeting. **ACFO**

**Councillor Paul Gittings retired from the meeting.**

**60. TRADING BY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES**

The Fire Authority was informed of the outcome of the Government's review of the trading powers of Fire and Rescue Authorities.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the report be Noted.

**61. ABATEMENT OF PENSION ON THE RE-EMPLOYMENT OF A FIREFIGHTER**

The Fire Authority was informed of the Firefighters Pension Scheme Circular FPSC 10/2009, which was issued on 25 September 2009, and which announced the Communities and Local Government's (CLG) intention to make

changes to the Firefighters Pension Scheme in relation to the abatement of pension on the re-employment of a firefighter. The Fire Authority reviewed its policy in respect of abatement in the light of the proposed changes to the Firefighters Pension Scheme.

Councillor Mrs Prue Bray stated that it would have been helpful, within the presented report, to have been advised how other Fire Authorities were implementing this. The Chief Fire Officer reported that this was not yet known.

Councillor Jeff Brooks felt that there was an inherent unfairness in the abatement of pensions, that it should not be done by role, and that no financial provision had been made within the early considerations of the forthcoming budget for next year.

Councillor Alan Ward supported the CLG's intention to make changes to the Firefighters Pension Scheme in relation to the abatement of pension on the re-employment of a firefighter. He felt however, that should Option 3 be accepted, equality issues could arise.

Councillor Peter Jones supported the adoption of the general policy of abatement, however felt that there should be a degree of flexibility in its execution, either through the Chief Fire Officer or through a Member Panel.

The Vice-Chairman **Moved** that the Fire Authority should accept the CLG's expectation that abatement be introduced for retired firefighters seeking re-employment in non-operational roles, with effect from 25 September 2009, but, should the Chief Fire Officer believe that where there was a business case that abatement was not in the Fire Authority's overall interest, that this be presented through the decision process for approval. This was seconded by Councillor Alan Ward. On being put to the vote, the motion was carried, with no votes against.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the report be Noted.
- b) That the CLG's expectation that abatement be introduced for retired firefighters seeking re-employment in non-operational roles, with effect from 25 September 2009, be accepted, but, should the Chief Fire Officer believe that where there was a business case that abatement was not in the Fire Authority's overall interest, that this be presented through the decision process for approval.

**62. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ACT 2007**

The Fire Authority was advised on the current position with regard to the proposed application under the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 by The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

The Vice-Chairman **Moved** that the Fire Authority support the Officers' action agreeing to relist the Judicial Review Hearing to the last week in February 2010. This was seconded by Councillor Miss Emma Webster, and on being put to the vote was carried.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the report be Noted.
- b) That it be agreed that the Judicial Review Hearing should be relisted for the last week in February 2010.

CMO

### **63. REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD - CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chairman provided an update report as the Fire Authority's appointed Member to the Regional Management Board appointed Member.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the report be Noted.

### **64. SOUTH EAST FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE CONTROL CENTRE LTD (SEFRCCCL)**

The Fire Authority received a report from Councillor Angus Ross, as the 2009/10 Fire Authority's representative and Board Member on the South East Fire and Rescue Service Control Centre Ltd (SEFRCCCL), from the SEFRCCCL meeting held on 13 November 2009.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the report be Noted.

### **65. ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILS OF THE THAMES VALLEY REGION (ACTVaR)**

Councillor Owen Jeffery conveyed his apologies for not presenting a written report. He advised that he had attended the last meeting of the ACTVaR on 9 October 2009, the meeting being the penultimate meeting, as it had been agreed to dissolve the ACTVaR. He also referred briefly to some of the work undertaken by ACTVaR.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the report be Noted.

### **66. COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO THE FIRECONTROL PROGRAMME**

The Fire Authority was advised of the Communities and Local Government Committee's decision to undertake a brief inquiry into the FiReControl programme.

**Resolved, unanimously:**

- a) That the Communities and Local Government Committee Press Notice be Noted.
- b) That the Fire Authority's draft response be endorsed by the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Party Group Leaders and Councillor Angus Ross prior to its submission.

**CFO**

### **67. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES WORKING PARTIES AND OTHER GROUPS**

The Fire Authority received the Minutes of the following meetings of the Fire Authority's Committees:

- a) Audit and Performance Review Committee - 28 September 2009 (not yet approved). Councillor Mrs Kathy Newbound advised that the date of the next meeting had been subsequently changed, and that it would now take place on 17 December 2009.
- b) Strategic Asset Management Committee - 6 October 2009 (not yet approved).
- c) Management Committee - 19 October 2009 (not yet approved).

## **68. FORWARD PLAN**

### **Resolved:**

- a) That the Forward Plan be Noted.

## **69. DATE OF NEXT MEETING(S)**

- a) Wednesday 17 February 2010 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, Bracknell Forest Borough Council.
- b) Wednesday 21 April 2010 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, Slough Borough Council.
- c) Wednesday 30 June 2010 at 6.30pm (venue to be advised) (Annual Meeting).

## **70. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

### **Resolved:**

- a) That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public be excluded from the meeting for the following Agenda Items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the said Act indicated, and is exempt information if, and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

**Councillor Alan Ward retired from the meeting.**

## **71. PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2009**

### **Resolved:**

- a) That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 September 2009 be Approved for signing by the Chairman.